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THE LIFE & TIMES OF
RAJAH RAMMOHUN ROY

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THE LIFE & TIMES OF
RAJAH
RAMMOHUN
ROY

B.N. DASGUPTA



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To The Memory

of

Sophia Dobson Collet

the English lady whose profound appreciation of Rammohun's life and activities led her to collect vast materials of Rammohun's career in India and in England without which the world would have remained so much the poorer.

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B.N. DASGUPTA

PREFACE

For a proper delineation of Rajah Rammohun Roy's life, we need a vast canvas as he passed through many phases of life in quick succession. There is hardly any aspect of life in which he was not interested, hardly any side of human activities in which he did not take part and hardly any sphere where he did not show intense loyalty and devotion. I have tried to give in this book the important events of Rammohun's life in greater details than ordinarily available (reference books being very scanty), emphasising the significance of the events as far as possible and their relevance in the particular time they took place. Thus I have tried to construct the man with the materials available taking into account his mental responses to different situations. I have attempted to indicate how deeply Rammohun's mind reacted to the degrading influences in the prevailing society and how majestically he rose above them with his indomitable courage and faith in the Supreme Dispenser. In the course of my presentation, I had to tackle certain matters which led me to some side-issues to which I have drawn attention since they are highly thought-provoking.

I have discussed in this book the social and political conditions of the period just preceding Rammohun's active life and consequently I have given briefly the British policy in regard to allowing into India the English missionaries and on secular training upto the time when the ban on them was lifted finally.

Rammohun was essentially a practical man with unique devotion to duty and with the patience needed for its execution. Once he saw and felt that society, specially in Bengal, had sunk so low with idolatrous observances and meaningless practices, he tried to recreate for the people, through tracts, India's heritage and its past achievements. He also sensed that unity among different sections of the people was essential and that education (religious as well as secular) was the best, if not the

only, way to reach the desired goal. He therefore began to translate into Bengali, Hindi and English the Upanishads which contained the stored-up knowledge and experiences of the ancient thinkers of India: these were the Upanishads which the Persian and the French scholars translated and on which later grew up a large literature in German also.

I have shown Rammohun's busy life in England, his discussions with the ecclesiastical groups and his contacts with important officials and members of Parliament on various matters relating to administrative reforms in India with special reference to the revenue and judicial systems. His social life in London reached climax with the audience with the King of England who gave him a unique honour by inviting him to his coronation with the rank of Ambassador.

His visit to Paris and his audience with the King of France was another historic event. For a Bengalee nobleman of those days, in constant contact with European cultural life through Digby, Woodford and others and with a sentimental attachment for Liberty, Equality and Fraternity of the French Revolution, this audience with the King of France was a great honour specially as he was bearing with him the French academic distinction already conferred on him in absentia some years ago. The French intellectual circles were aware of Rammohun's earnest endeavours to reform the Hindu society by tracts based on the sacred scriptural texts and among the persons who took interest in him was M. D'Acosta, Editor of *Times*, Calcutta, who sent in 1818 to Abbe Gregoire, Bishop of Blois in France, a set of Rammohun's books with a short sketch of his life. References of Rammohun are also found in *Chronique Religieuse*, *Revue Encyclopedique*, *Journal Asiatique*.

Rammohun was a man strong in mind and body, intellect and emotion and he was determined to approach the problems of India's destiny with vigour, trusting that India's future would remain safe under English traditions. In the meantime, once he was convinced that the great message of Indian scriptures was Unitarianism, he proclaimed it from the little corner of the East loud enough to make England's old historian William

Roscoe and old philosopher Jeremy Bentham come out of their retirement to welcome him. His voice reached also America's Unitarian philosopher Ellery Channing, and he, like many other friends, extended hearty invitation to Rammohun to visit his country. Alas, that was not to be.

As a reformer, thinker, intellectual and in all these roles put together, Rammohun was one of the greatest of the world figures, as great as Luther or Erasmus, irrespective of the measure of success attained.

The facts and events in Rammohun's life have their own importance but they do not constitute his real genius. Whether it is the introduction of English and Science education in the country, the abolition of Suttee or the restoration of liberty of the Press, or the introduction of Jury System or the emancipation of Indian society from idolatry, the fundamental strain underlying all his activities was service to, and uplift of, mankind and above all the dominating sense of human freedom. This love for freedom, whether political, economic, social or even abstract, makes Rammohun not only outstanding for all times but also keeps his spirit ever modern. His composure amidst thundering or even mean opposition, his peaceful and dignified restraint before detractors and opposers depicted a large catholicity of mind which marked in turn also a certain freedom of mind.

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Social and Economic Condition of Bengal in the 18th Century

RAMMOHUN was born in the village Radhanagar (Khanakul-Krishnagar, in the district Hooghly) which was predominantly a place of brahminical culture and which was a typical village of the distant past, more than two hundred years ago, with a stereotyped life from morning till night dominated by traditional religious duties and unalterable customs. One would see that in such a village, agriculture was the main occupation for the common man of the lower classes, other men of the lower classes were also engaged in small village industries. On the other hand, children of the literate section of the upper castes used to attend "*Tol*" which was the centre for their first lessons on the ancient model. This *Tol* was a common feature of advanced villages where, apart from ordinary education, special work on various branches of Sanskrit learning was carried on or some special study was conducted directly under the *guru* in his house or *ashram*. Some pupils went for specialised training and some prepared themselves to be ordinary *pundits* (teachers) and others to be priests or to be engaged in some minor work. Quite a considerable number of highly specialised men took to Ayurvedic studies to carry on their medical profession. By far the bulk of the non-brahmin population of the village depended entirely on cultivation and others either engaged in the neighbouring zamindari offices or for the more clever men, in the administrative

departments of the Nawab of the *subah*. For the more quick and cunning type of men, no place could be more congenial than the Nawab's estate-employment or *zamindari kutcheri* (office) or civil and criminal courts established by the British in the country. These men prospered on litigations and they developed a special kind of shrewdness and cunning in these affairs. When their shrewdness overstepped all limits, they became a menace to the society. Otherwise, on the whole, village life was simple, but very stereotyped. The routine of the village life had also a little lighter side, viz., groups of old people meeting together in shady corners occupied themselves in continuous community-smoking, discussing all kinds of social and religious topics, likewise, in other cosy corners, some grown-up youths with less serious occupations, generally taken as village-vagabonds, engaged in all kinds of fantastic news and outlandish topics endlessly discussing and taking part with a large fund of indigenous humour in gossips on calumnies, quarrels and rivalries in their own village and in the neighbouring ones.

The programme of the day was quite different for the womenfolk. Their morning began with elaborate rituals and oblations, *puja* ceremonials, hospitality to Vaishnava *sadhus* chanting *harinam* or to brahmin priests acting sometimes as advisers and sometimes as purveyors of information, as match-makers, *kirtan* singers or in the role of religious guides advising men and women in distress.

To the above daily routine should be added the weekly, monthly and seasonal community *pujas* under different names — Satyanarayan, Luxmi, Saraswati, Durga, Ganesh and Doljatra (Holi) etc. which crowded the year with colourful ceremonies. Some of them included animal sacrifice to Kali or Durga, practices which evoked both fear and abhorrence and yet were socially accepted as solemn injunctions of *sastras*. Rural society was thus immersed in mechanical rituals which were an amalgam of Tantric, Buddhist and Hindu rites. Then came *marriages*, *sradhs*, *upanayana* (sacred-thread-wearing) ceremonials adding further rituals most of which were beyond any rational explanation and which meant

propitiation of priests. Thus there were endless festivities but these ceremonies used to take place without participation of a large section of villagers who came from the lowest castes and the untouchables. These latter groups of men suffered from social bans and restrictions and even suffered humiliations. They had always to show subservience to the priests, and had to calmly bear all priestly dispensations and occasional penalties which invariably caused heavy financial burden to them.

The people belonging to the early civilisations had to wholly rely on nature and consequently agricultural dominance on various occupations was inevitable. The people of India being placed in a happy position in respect of climate and natural resources for subsistence, their struggle for existence was negligible then. Naturally the Indian mind had leisure enough to soar to contemplative heights to divine the mysteries of the universe, life and death. The people occupied themselves with observances of their own religious formulations and were also busy with religious speculations. In course of time these observances got the upper hand and secular progress was hardly thought of. The religious propensities did not allow much physical exertions and the result was that neither physical stamina grew nor were natural resources exploited. This therefore led gradually to India's poverty. The economists and sociologists urge that these religious ideas and practices have not only formed our social structure but also our economic relations amongst the people of various strata, and also trace our poverty to all this. The tide of time was, however, irresistible—a turn must come. That turn came and Rammohun realised it and cried a halt to mechanical life and diverted attention to various channels of development. It was he who gave the turn and society got the fullest benefit out of foreign impact.

Even at this time, the largest section of the people was the cultivating class. They tilled the land and fed the whole village by their hard work. These men depended entirely on nature for a good crop, and if nature failed them any year, they faced a helpless situation. This is why quite a large section of the peasantry, besides carrying on agriculture in the traditional way

took part in hand-spinning, hand-weaving and handicrafts and there were others who even combined minor cottage industries. There were still others who earned their living as growers of vegetables and fruits, as carpenters, smithies, hut-builders, roadmakers, potters, etc. There were still others who were engaged in arboriculture, bee-keeping and other similar occupations. These activities did not go beyond the neighbouring villages. Thus life moved in a narrow circle in the midst of bare necessities. With growing population there was hardly self-sufficiency in the village but though there did not appear any marked shortage of resources for ordinary purposes, it broadly indicated hand-to-mouth existence. If then this state of things was disturbed by any unproductive expenditure of the the rich and profligate section of the people or by a rise in population, the situation became a serious problem since existing economy was precariously balanced. In the earliest times when the villages developed production, they had also a process of internal distribution and thus village economy was maintained throughout, but the lacuna was that there was no serious thinking among the senior people and there was no organisational effort for increase of productive resources and one can say that savings and capital accumulation were not stressed sufficiently. Not only was there little effort in that direction, what was very depressing was that along with that class of profligate men some Europeans joined and lived a free and irresponsible life of gambling, racing, drinking and had even Indian concubines; once the moral standard suffered, their cultural level went down. These vices not only brought pettiness and propensities to crimes of all sorts among the landholding classes but amongst the common people also to some extent. Therefore a constant waste of money and a marked deterioration of fruitful activities occurred. On the one side, this waste and unproductive expenditures and on the other side, population increase invariably brought about economic deterioration.

At this point, a section of people belonging to the middle strata of the society largely took to service relating to revenue and judicial work and thus relieved society from the natural consequences of indolence and wasteful life. A section of

higher social order concentrated on intellectual activities of traditional nature for which Bengal was very favourably placed. Bengal being a region of numerous canals small and big and the soil being very fertile, the people did not have to toil much for a simple living. It was just the barest economic and social set-up in which intellectual life could continue to grow. One could see in the society, some men of the higher castes specialising in the study of different systems of philosophy like *Samkhya*, *Nyaya*, etc., some in *Mimamsa*, *Smriti*, *Byakarana* (grammar), *Ganit*, (mathematics), *Sidhanta Jyotish* (astronomy), *Falita Jyotish* (astrology), *Ayurveda* (medicine) and other subjects. Apart from these popular studies, some scholars of special merit engaged themselves in intellectual work in specialised branches like Buddhism, Jainism, Tantra, Vedanta, etc. The lower-middle class Brahmins took to the vocation of teaching pupils at lower levels and others who had hardly any education worth the name, got into priestly occupations which involved no special study or responsibility. This state of affairs was largely to be seen amongst the Hindus who formed the majority of inhabitants of Bengal.

Muslims formed the other section with a large minority. Except a small number who had migrated to East Bengal from northern India at the time of Mughal rule, most of them sprang from lower Hindu castes, who had been driven to accept Islam by the tyranny of upper caste Hindus and by the rigours of Hinduism. The general economic and social conditions of the Muslims was as bad as that of Hindus of the same level, or was perhaps a little worse due to educational backwardness. The Muslims pursued, as the Hindus, the same agricultural occupations, handicrafts and cottage industries, over and above spinning and weaving. The two communities lived together peacefully so long as religious fanaticism was not injected into them by their irresponsible leaders and by external agencies.

The Muslims played hardly any role in the intellectual progress of Bengal of that period which was apparent from the fact that there were no reputed centres of Islamic learning as the Hindus had in Nabadwip, Bhatpara, Bikrampur or in

Mithila. Hindus and Muslims had more or less the same economic status but the former lived somewhat better. Among the landholders, the Hindus were more in number and also more prosperous. In religious matters Muslims were as bigoted as Hindus, but as the former were monotheistic, they had much less of a share in elaborate ceremonials. The understanding between the two communities was such that many Muslim families took part in Hindu festivals, and amity between the two communities was a noticeable feature for many years except for minor frictions of no particular significance.

Thus both Hindus and Muslims of the middle and lower strata continued to live almost on equal terms until European traders especially the East India Company started brisk activities and the Indians were stirred to work harder to protect their interests although their financial resources were meagre and the inner urge was insufficient. The real impact came when the East India Company began to get preferential treatment to exploit the country's resources. They selected, for their main centre of trade, Calcutta¹—a new name (European twist to the name "Kalikata") for the then small villages Sutanati, Govindapur and Kalikata—on the bank of the river Hooghly not very far from the Bay of Bengal. These three villages had no special claim to importance, except being situated on a river and near the sea, they could serve very well the purpose of trade with Europe. Calcutta thus became very important for men of different countries bent on trade. "To it flocked adventurers intent upon the rapid accumulation of riches."

During the Muslim rule, the picture of trade and commerce in Bengal suffered considerably in as much as corruption² entered in a marked degree. It is widely held that the lack of sound financial principles was mainly responsible for bringing in malpractices and thus started slow deterioration of the character of the natives of the soil. What was specially noteworthy was that the administration of law also by the muslim rulers was so loose, arbitrary and personal that the administration became the centre of corruption and of underhand dealings. It is therefore natural that bribery and other vices should develop at a

quick pace. This was inevitable because the rulers in most cases came to power by bloody and secret paths and not by valour and open warfare. The standard of public morality of such rulers was so low in many instances they did not hesitate to take cash presents, small or big, from foreign traders and in exchange such traders were allowed either to trade on a very nominal duty on goods or completely free from any duty. These rulers, however short the duration of their rule never could realise to what a serious disadvantage the natives of the soil were put by this so-called extra-generous attitude towards the foreign traders.

Amongst the foreign traders the most important were the Portuguese, Dutch, Armenians, French and the British and as a result of competition and long struggle over a considerable period, the British traders were successful in ousting all others sometime after the East India Company proved itself a very competent organisation in both financial resources and business abilities. The Company had been trading for a long time and had now established itself by taking the fullest advantage of its unique position in trade and commerce. Since they came to political power, the British traders and merchants, though much better placed than all the others, began to take advantage of the native trader's poor and helpless condition and hence exploitation ran rampant. The redeeming feature since the British came to full power after 1757, was that some order was coming into the administration and public attempts began to be made for honest and regular dealings by enforcement of public law. To put things in a better shape and also to finance the warfares at different places in India like the First Maratha War and Second Mysore War, large sums of money were needed and Warren Hastings took drastic and oppressive measures by questionable methods which later on became the subject matter of his impeachment. Thus much ground was covered since the time of Clive, Verelst, Cartier and Warren Hastings.

In 1786, Lord Cornwallis came as Governor-General and found poverty all round and corrupt practices even in the high level officers. His first act was to raise salary level of the government employees and he expected to curb dishonest

practices to some extent by raising the incomes. Then he gave very serious attention to the land-revenue problems in the Presidency of Bengal. After some investigations, he came to the decision that under the circumstances existing then, Permanent Settlement would be the most effective measure and helpful to the country. It was a great achievement for which Cornwallis will be ever remembered. These Governors-General³ played their part very admirably in different fields. It should be borne in mind that these Governors-General had to carry with them the two most important bodies, viz.,⁴ (i) Court of Directors and side by side (ii) Board of Control in London. From the beginning of British rule, the administrative policies were in the hands of these two bodies, the first named was more powerful in the earlier years and the latter was to become so some time later when it realised the responsibility laid upon it by law.

It would be seen that at this time, besides agricultural activities, handspinning and handweaving were the main occupations and hence grew a cottage industry in textiles in Bengal. So was the case, more or less, with many other important places of India. Of all these, Dacca (Bengal) specialised in very fine fibres and this created a reputation all over the world for its finest muslin usually known as "Dacca muslin" (it is said that the Egyptian mummies^{4A} used to be wrapped in Dacca muslin). The British merchants were impressed by the possibilities of cotton and silk fabrics intermixed and cotton piece goods in general. With a view to create a larger market, they not only were bent upon developing this industry but must have entertained the sinister motive of capturing and enlarging it for themselves. It was in the nineties of the 18th century that all-round exploitation came upon Bengal in particular and in other centres in general. Rammohun was young when Bengal was in full grip of British exploitation.

Engineering industry in different forms constituted the basis of British economy then. The Britishers developed it from the beginning and on such lines as would help to manufacture industrial machineries, appliances, shipbuilding and industries for defence and offence. This superiority in the industrial

sphere had much to do in gaining overall superiority in India and the other European powers had to leave the country one after another. The rapid growth of engineering technology in Britain gave them such an incentive that it did not take a long time to develop small but highly useful contrivances for the much-needed textile industry also. The contrivances and mechanical innovations completely revolutionised the conception of manufacturing economy. It is clear that the engineering excellence being the basis of Britain's all round success, India with all her man-power and high skill in the manually-operated textile industry could not compete with the mechanically-operated manufacture. Here a pertinent question confronts an enquirer as to how, in the case of India, in spite of the fact that she had well-developed Iron and Steel Industry, shipbuilding industry etc. in ancient times, she later on lapsed into almost nothingness. The eminent economist Ranade wrote in 1892, "the iron industry not only supplied all local wants but it also enabled India to export its finished products to foreign countries." Also it will be noted what Lord Wellesley said in 1800, "The ports of U.K. contain about 10,000 tons of shipping built in India calculated for conveyance of cargoes to England." It should also be remembered that there are iron pillars and granite relics which still bear good testimony to high efficiency in India's chemical and scientific technology. Our immediate concern is to understand how the Bengal industries suffered.

In Bengal, there were various products with which some kind of industry was attached—some very profitable, others less but useful and necessary. There were industries relating to dye-stuffs, salt-peter, hemp, flax, indigo, opium, salt, sugar, tobacco, etc., some of which received special attention from the Dutch, some from the French, some from the Armenians, etc. These did not play any special part in obtaining discriminatory treatment from Britishers. There were other industries in which Britishers' exploitation reached the highest point. This happened since the victory of Plassey and it was found that the attitude of the Britishers in India was highly exploitative through the agencies of the Court and the Board. Left to themselves, the Bengal industries could grow very well and if the Britishers put in adequate capital, the growth would have been

worthy of notice but finding a clear field they began to speedily exploit and at last decided to shift the manufacturing part to England leaving India mainly to look after the raw materials—produce them and export to Britain.

In the middle of the 18th century, Bengal textile industry was in a flourishing condition. But it began to decline fast and the famine came. The textile industry in respect of cotton and silk weaving, manufacture of piece goods made of silk and cotton intermixed looked up a little still after a few years we find happy descriptions in many respects completely changed.

“Rouse, at one time the provincial chief of Dacca, stated in a letter in 1776 that the production of cotton cloth in Dacca in that year amounted to £ 200,000. Ten years ago, production had been £ 300,000 per annum” (*Trade Relations Between England and India* by C.J. Hamilton, Calcutta University, p. 198). Hamilton adds “according to Taylor, the Company’s Resident in Dacca, the output of cloth in 1753 was estimated at £ 350,000”. All this shows that Bengal production of cloth and its trade were in steep decline largely due to decline of the court splendours and also due to ravages of famine. In the later stages, competition was an important factor.

Bengal in Full Decline

While Bengal industries were fast declining, we find that in the nineties of the 18th century, Britain, with its textile industry (cotton and silk fabrics) making full use of new techniques, found itself in a position to bring down the cost of production and prices. Britain’s imports of Indian goods began to decline. Mechanical innovations started some time in 1760, and by 1785, they had brought about great and significant progress. Consequently, the demand for Indian textiles became distinctly less and production fell considerably. The main centre, Dacca, recorded a large fall.

“The steep decline of the cotton manufactures of Dacca may

be dated from 1793, about six years after mule twist came into general use in England. According to the report of the Commercial Resident of the Dacca Factory in 1799, the manufacturing industry was diminished to one-fifth of what it had been till 1792. The value of the Company's cotton goods export from Dacca in 1765 was £ 450,000. In 1800 the city's population dwindled to 200,000. (Taylor, *Cotton Manufactures of Dacca*). The decline of this city of great trade was thenceforth very rapid (Tavernier).

In this connection, the words of Henry Tucker who was once a Director of East India Company may be quoted :

“What is the commercial policy which we have adopted in this country with relation to India? The silk manufactures and its piece-goods made of silk and cotton intermixed have long since been excluded altogether from our markets; and of late, partly in consequence of the operation of a duty of 67 per cent, but chiefly from the effect of superior machinery, the cotton fabrics, which hitherto constituted the staple of India, have not only been displaced in this country, but we actually export our cotton manufactures to supply a part of the consumption of our Asiatic possessions. India is thus reduced from the state of a manufacturing to that of an agricultural country.” (R.C. Dutt *Economic History of India*).

True, the steep decline of industries of Bengal (also of Madras and all over India) commenced in the seventies of the 18th century but the decline became much worse due to lack of highly improved techniques and in many cases non-introduction of innovations in industries as also from keen competition.

On the one hand, economy in the British manufacture and on the other hand, fall of demand from the Delhi aristocracy brought about a new situation. It requires hardly any elaboration that one of the main reasons for the above condition was the decline of the demands of the royal Court and the consequent recession of trade worsened by the famine⁵ in Bengal

which took a very large toll of weavers (*Economic Annals of Bengal* by J.C. Sinha, p. 63) which was responsible for a scarcity of workers and much higher wages and cost of materials and therefore the result was much higher cost of production for the textile industry as a whole.

The discriminatory^o measures against India did not play a small part in this process of decline. Then again, our attention should be diverted to another important sector, viz., shipping. India had a flourishing coastal trade from long past as will be seen in the book *Ancient Shipping of India* by Radhakumad Mukherjee and we see how badly it has suffered as will be clear from the following :

“European domination began in the coasting trade of India long before the period but in the 18th century India’s coasting trade was mainly in British hands. The servants of the English East India Company and British Free Merchants made very considerable profit out of it. About the middle of the eighteenth century, they were hard hit by the decreasing demand for Bengal’s raw silk and sugar in the Malabar as also the Coromandel coast of India and the fall in the import of cotton from the west coast to Bengal. But even so late as 1756 the annual export of sugar was about 50,000 mds. to Madras, Malabar, Bombay, Surat, Sind, Muscat, Persia, Mocha, Jedda. This yielded a profit of about 50 per cent and the returns were generally in specie.” (N.K. Sinha *Economic History*, Vol. I, p. 124)

Attention may also be drawn to the following :

“What was known as coast salt from Coromandel began to be imported into Bengal in considerable quantities in the 1780’s and 1790’s. A vested interest grew up. Voices were raised in vain protest. Bengal produced sufficient salt for her consumption and for that of the neighbouring areas. The import of cheap coast salt was the first threat to the existence of Bengal’s salt industry. The revenue derived by the Government of Fort St. George from this salt that was imported into Bengal was inconsiderable but

the Board of Revenue in Madras wrote, "the trade being of material assistance to the ship-owners the Board of Revenue on the latter account only regret its extinction." Salt manufacture on the Coromandel coast was developed in the interest of the British ship-owners though this threatened the existence of the indigenous salt industry in Bengal. (N.K. Sinha *Economic History*, Vol. I, p. 229).

No doubt these industries in Bengal were in the initial stage but if sufficient resources could be had, they would have prospered very well. What happened was that flagrantly unfair treatment and highhandedness of the East India Company were responsible to a large measure for the decline of some industries and disappearance of others. The Company crippled Indian industries on the one hand by fully utilising the raw materials of Bengal and giving it only a very low return and on the other hand selling the finished products at a high price.

Besides taking advantage of exploitation, all kinds of demands and misappropriation were made upon Bengal. We find :

"Import of bullion almost entirely ceased not long after the battle of Plassey and export of bullion for aiding other Presidencies and for helping China trade began almost systematically. The Directors wanted Bengal to supply 24 lakhs for China Investment in 1770 and the same amount in 1771." (N.K. Sinha *Economic History*, Vol. I, p. 14).

We again find :

"The practice of sending silver from Bengal to China commenced as early as 1757 (Verelst, *View*, p. 85). So long as clandestine opium trade with China could not be fully organised, bullion poured into China from Bengal in the sixties at the rate of about twenty four lakhs a year, in the early seventies about twenty lakhs a year. In the 1790's, it became perhaps unnecessary to send bullion for the purchase of tea in China.

Tribute paid to Shah Alam from 1765 to 1772 led to a total drain of twenty millions of rupees from Bengal during the period. For the purchase of diamonds by the top men in the East India Company's service a very considerable quantity of bullion had to be sent to Oudh and Hyderabad." (N.K. Sinha *Economic History*, Vol. I, p. 233)

Then again we have to notice :

"According to Grant, there was an accumulation of at least two hundred and fifty millions of rupees from revenues in Bengal during all these years. Out of this sum, Nawab Mir Quasim took with him about 45 millions when he left Bengal and about fifty or fifty-five millions must have been paid to Englishmen as gifts or presents." (N.K. Sinha *Economic History*, Vol. I, p. 232)

Other Methods of Exploitation

The textile units in India also progressively adopted improved techniques under their enterprising owners, and their products were severely subjected to discriminatory tariffs. It may be remembered that there was a time in the middle of the 18th century, when the Nawabs of Bengal recognised the right granted to the Company to carry on its import and export trade duty-free. Not only this but there were instances where equal terms were brought about for fairness to all. However when arbitrary tariffs were imposed, the owners were driven to diversify their exports of raw cotton, raw silk, hemp, flax, indigo, sugar, jute, etc., in place of piece goods and finished goods. Trade expanded on these lines, especially after 1813, when, by revision of the Charter, free-trade came.

That British interests needed only raw cotton and silk fibre for export to Britain was clear from all their dealings. The policy of East India Company was not at all in favour of fostering industries in India. As early as 1769 its directors gave a kind of mandate that the export of silk fibre should be encouraged and that of fabrics discouraged. Steps were taken to implement this unwritten policy and the results were as

expected. Round about 1793 Britain's exports of silk fabrics to the Cape of Good Hope and India rose from £ 156 in 1794 to £ 27,876 in ten years while India's exports of fabrics shrank correspondingly. Thus India's economic interests were completely overlooked.

It is true that much stress was laid by the British to import more and more silk fibre but it should also be recorded that they tried to improve the reeling method. Prof. C.J. Hamilton in his *Trade Relations between England and India*, writes :

“The Bengal silk, reeled by the crude methods of the Indian peasant, was only found suitable, however, for the manufacture of a few articles and the Company thereupon decided to introduce into India the mode of reeling practised in the filatures of Italy. It was hoped by this means to render England independent of other sources of supply. The Company therefore began to set up the necessary buildings, furnaces, reels, etc., required for the improved process and to instruct the natives in this new method from which for some time they were greatly averse. In 1769 no fewer than 12 Italian and French skilled growers of mulberry and spinners of silk were brought into Bengal. In 1770 James Wiss of Piedmont arrived in India and devoted himself to the task of improving the silk industry of India with the hope of enabling it to compete with that of China and Italy In its anxiety to push the Bengal silk industry, the Company often imported larger quantities than they could dispose of. This led to renewed efforts to increase the demand for Bengal silk and it was suggested that the surplus raw silk should be thrown into Organzine in England and used as a substitute for the Organzine hitherto largely imported from Italy. . . ” (p. 181)

Some Improvements Effectuated

By the Act of 1813, a good many changes were brought about in the fiscal side, such as separation of the Company's territorial accounts from commercial accounts. This brought about an enormous change, and together with the private

merchant's right to carry on trade with Britain, the picture of Indo-Britain economic relations changed beyond recognition. After 1824, the Company exported no more merchandise but only political and military stores. Britain purchased only raw silk, saltpetre and indigo from Calcutta as before. Thus up to 1833 trade between the Company and Calcutta fell noticeably low. This meant that while the Company's Indian trade declined heavily, private merchants to whom the Indian trade was first opened in 1813, began to take a growing large⁷ share, with the result that by 1830, the private merchant's share was three times that of the Company. (*Economic History* by R.C. Dutt, p. 202).

Political Complications — Wellesley and Minto

It should not be forgotten that Britain was experiencing troublous times from the end of the 18th century (Wellesley was the ruler of India then) when Napoleon menaced Europe and the British possessions in the east. It was therefore natural for Britain to experience marked economic ups and downs, and consequently it was also natural for tariffs to fluctuate in accordance with the very uncertain movements of the time. Britain's anxieties and worries at last ended with her victory over Napoleon in 1815.

When Minto came as Governor-General in 1807, India had been greatly perturbed by the stern measures Wellesley had taken to suppress freedom of the press as well as by the general uneasiness caused by the French triumphs in the Napoleonic wars. It appears that Minto, worried over this situation, was trying to divert popular attention from these alarms and anxieties by taking up the issue of education in the country. He therefore wrote a Minute⁸ (March 6, 1811) drawing the attention of the Government to the inadequacy of the existing educational facilities and proposed the establishment of two more colleges. At this time when Lord Minto wrote to the Government for more educational centres, he only thought of the traditional Sanskrit education with no mention of science.

Rammohun's Preparations for India's Uplift

At this time Rammohun was in Rangpur studying and translating *Upanishads*, *Smritis* and kindred literature and his name was well known only within India. It is apparent that Rammohun had no social and public life till he came to Calcutta in 1815. But when he came, one of the first things he did was to start the idea of an English School. Upto 1814 he was educating himself not only in Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian, English, Indian Philosophy (*Sruti* and *Smriti*) but kept himself in closest touch with India's past history. It must be at this time when he could also lay his hands on various well-known books on Gibbon, Hume, Voltaire, Bruce's *Annals*, Anderson's *History of Commerce*, Sir Thomas Roe's *Journal*, etc., in the library of Digby. It must be here in Rangpur that he found ample leisure to study Buddhism, Jainism and other religions. It was here specially (also in Murshidabad, Hazaribagh, Jessore, etc.) where he had intensively studied land problems and judicial practices as he found them. He must have also felt happy at the significant changes made in British policy by the new Charter of 1813 by which free trade and admission of missionaries and schoolmasters⁹ into India were allowed by withdrawing previous restrictions. It may be noted that Minto's efforts did not succeed and the Court of Directors¹⁰ wrote to Governor-General on the matter in 1814.

Rammohun realised that for a fuller life, Bengal (or rather India) needed radical transformation from orthodoxy to liberalism and hence he started campaign for social and religious regeneration through translations of the scriptures and writings of tracts giving modern views. He thought this to be the best way to educate the men (the leaders who were orthodox) by putting before them the highest thoughts of ancient India. He began to do this after about ten years of preparations which included his study period at Kashi and employment experiences under his father and Revenue and Judiciary office-management under British officials in which he saw how degraded the ordinary men had become, in course of centuries, by lack of proper guidance. Rammohun sat at Rangpur with

heavy accumulations of all these thoughts in his mind. He saw during his service years all kinds of corruption, evil practices and wasteful spending over useless social ceremonies. He was already weighed down by the inhuman evil practice of *Suttee* and to this was added a suttee in his own house—of his brother's wife. All these led him to one conclusion, viz., that the orthodox leaders of the society who, apart from orthodoxy, were men of learning in Sanskrit and Persian, require most urgently liberal views. They could lean to liberalism only if scriptural texts of the ancient Hindus could be shown to them. He therefore did translations in to English, Hindi and Bengali of the *Upanishads* and other scriptures. His entire stay in Rangpur was taken by this stupendous work although he was also advising Digby and managing the Udasi Estate.

When he came to Calcutta in 1815 he wanted the Hindus to take interest in social matters and the Atmiya Sabha sittings were held to discuss religious and other social matters. Rammohun was busy in getting his writings and translations published in the form of books (*Vedantasar*, *Vedanta Grantha*, etc.). Thus he was busy in religious, social and educational progress of Bengal in particular and India in general.

Rammohun was aware about the exploitation of Bengal that was going on in different ways, but he was helpless unless public opinion was created for which education was essential. A few years ago, Bengal was losing heavily to the point of exhaustion in the China trade and through other modes of trade with Britain. It may be kept in mind that in the case of trade with Britain, while Bengal's resources were being depleted, new technology was developing and coming within the knowledge of the Indians, and the trading and mercantile operations were being systematised. After a few decades, came Railways and Telegraphs in about 1856, about twenty years having elapsed after the Grand Trunk Road's construction in 1839. India began to develop much more complicated technology through the British industrialists and she benefited to a large extent. Introduction of Railways was indeed a big step which opened immense possibilities in many directions. This worked to the advantage of the British no doubt, in

their commercial activities, but it also conferred incalculable benefits to the people and country in general. But the gains of the British, however large, were much less significant when compared with India's gains by western contacts. Also for the first time, different regions of India came into much closer relations, an essential pre-condition for Indian national unity as conceived by Rammohun; for the first time India's vast internal market was unified.

This was the line of progress and economic growth from the second half of 18th century right upto the first decade of the 19th century when Rammohun came into prominence¹¹ and he was taking all round interest for the uplift of the people of India—of Bengal in particular.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

Note 1 : How Calcutta came to be settled

In the middle of the 17th century, important *Kuthis* (Centres), established at Dacca, Kassimbazar, Hooghly, Malda, Patna, etc., for trade of the E.I. Company and other foreign powers particularly the Portuguese, became quite important in various ways. After some time the British traders established their supremacy over all others.

About a hundred years before the battle of Plassey, Job Charnock came to India as E.I. Company's petty servant and was placed at Kassimbazar. He was then sent to Hooghly where trade developed enormously. Charnock's manoeuvres angered Sayestha Khan, the then Ruler of Bengal. Charnock fled with his men and while passing through Sutanuti on the river Hugli, liked the quietness and the position. When he reached Hijli, there was a skirmish with the Mughals—Charnock had to fly back to Sutanuti where he made a shelter for himself and his men. In a short time he found it was a waste of time to stay there longer. So he proceeded to Madras which had come under development, a little earlier. Aurangzeb was so long engaged in fighting in the Deccan but on return to Delhi thoroughly tired of fighting with Marathas, Rajputs, he recalled

the British in order to have a regular flow of income and gradual growth of trade and commerce. In response to the call of Ibrahim Khan, the then Governor of Bengal, Charnock arrived in 1690 at Sutanuti where the British now settled and which later on began to be called Calcutta (one of the villages was Kalikata). The old Governor of Bengal, Ibrahim Khan being a pious man gave permission to the foreign powers to build forts for their own protection—little did he understand its implications. Fort William was built by the British in 1700.

Note 2 : East India Company's Working

The East India Company first obtained its Charter of Privileges in 1600 during the reign of Queen Elizabeth from the Emperor Jehangir to carry on trade with the East Indies. The Court of Directors of the Company consisted generally of friends and relations of the leading members of the Company. The Directors, 24 in number, were first elected in 1709. The Court of Directors was invested by the Company's general body with the management of its territorial possessions in India as well as its commerce in the East and West. (Rammohun's preliminary remarks, see his *English Works*, Part III, p. 7).

In 1773, the British Parliament, by an Act commonly known as the Regulating Act, declared that all territorial acquisitions by conquest or by treaty belonged to the State and directed that all correspondence connected with their civil or military government should be submitted to the consideration of the minister concerned.

In 1784, the Crown established a Board of Commissioners (commonly called Board of Control) to regulate the Company and its executive officers in India. The Board consisted of a President (who usually had a seat in the British Cabinet) and of several members, honorary or otherwise, with secretary and subordinate officers.

Though the East India Company started with (1) a Court of Proprietors, (2) a Court of Directors with a Chairman, assisted by committees (for finance, revenue, judicial, political, military) it was the Directors who exercised much patronage

and nominated the Governor-General with the sanction of the Home Government, and also nominated persons for the posts of Governor and Commander-in-Chief.

The Company employed agents to collect from all parts of the country different articles of export, for which special warehouses were built.

The Board of Control was constituted in England under Pitt's India Act of 1784. A President and six members were responsible to Parliament, and of these two had to be ministers of the Crown. The Board had full power to direct and control all operations relating to civil and military affairs and the revenues of India. The President had the power to override completely the Court of Directors. On the other hand, the law provided that the initiation of business should ordinarily rest with the Court. Parliament exercised control on the Company through the Board.

In 1858, both the Court and the Board were replaced by an India Council and Secretary of State for India.

Note 3 : Minto on Education, March, 1811

It is a common remark, that science and literature are in a progressive state of decay among the natives of India. From every enquiry which I have been enabled to make on this interesting subject, that remark appears to me but too well founded. The number of the learned is not only diminished, but the circle of learning, even among those who still devote themselves to it, appears to be considerably contracted. The abstract sciences are abandoned, polite literature neglected, and no branch of learning cultivated but what is connected with the peculiar religious doctrines of the people. The immediate consequence of this state of things is, the disuse, and even actual loss, of many valuable books, and it is to be apprehended, that unless Government interpose with a fostering hand the revival of letters may shortly become hopeless from a want of books, or of persons capable of explaining them.

The principal cause of the present neglected state of literature in India is to be traced to the want of that encouragement which was formerly afforded to it by princes, chieftains and opulent individuals under the native governments. Such encouragement must always operate as a strong incentive to study and literary exertions, but especially in India, where the learned professions have little of any other support. The justness of these observations might be illustrated by a detailed consideration of the former and present state of science and literature at the three principal seats of Hindu learning, viz., Benares, Tirhoot and Nauddea (Nadia). Such a review would bring before us the liberal patronage which was formerly bestowed, not only by princes and others in power and authority, but also by the zamindars, on persons who had distinguished themselves by the successful cultivation of letters at these places. It would equally bring to our view the present neglected state of learning at those once celebrated places; and we should have to remark with regret, that the cultivation of letters was now confined to the few surviving persons or to such of the immediate descendants of those persons as had imbibed a love of science from their parents. It is seriously to be lamented that a nation particularly distinguished for its love and successful cultivation of letters in other parts of the empire should have failed to extend its fostering care to the literature of the Hindus, and to aid in opening to the learned in Europe the repositories of that literature.

It is not, however, the credit alone of the national character which is affected by the present neglected state of learning in the East. The ignorance of the natives in the different classes of society, arising from the want of proper education, is generally acknowledged. This defect not only excludes them as individuals from the enjoyment of all those comforts and benefits which the cultivation of letters is naturally calculated to afford, but operating as it does throughout almost the whole mass of the population, tends materially to obstruct the adopted for their better government. . . The following points appear particularly favourable to demand attention in revising the rules established for the government of the College of Benares. . . (*Raja Rammohun Roy and Progressive Movements*,

Records 1775—1845, by J.K. Majumdar, p. 223).

NOTES

1. See Explanatory note 1 p. 19.
2. Little doubt can be entertained about the prevalence of the crimes of perjury and forgery so frequently noticed in the reports... (*Selections from Educational Records 1781-1839*). "The Court of Directors, taking their cue from Cornwallis, argued that the financial principle of the Mughal empire had led to the debasement of the character of people of every rank. Nobody could perhaps deny that corruption had been very much in existence before Plassey. But it is also admitted that it reached its peak in the early years of British rule." (Sinha, op cit Vol. 1, p. 5)
3. In his *Wealth of Nations* Adam Smith wrote : "...The conduct of their servants in India, and the general state of their affairs both in India and Europe, became the subject of parliamentary inquiry; in consequence of which several very important alterations were made in the constitution of their Government, both at home and abroad. In India their principal settlements of Madras, Bombay and Calcutta, which had before been altogether independent of one another, were subjected to a Governor-General, assisted by a council of four assessors, parliament assuming to itself the first nomination of this Governor and Council who were to reside in Calcutta; that city now having become what Madras was before, the most important of the English settlements in India Instead of it, a new supreme court of judicature was established consisting of a chief justice and three judges to be appointed by the Crown."
4. See Explanatory note 2, p. 20.
- 4A. This indicates extraordinarily fine weaving and does not indicate that Bengal produced abundant supply of cotton (it was abundant in C.P., Berar and in Bombay side) but "towards the end of the 18th century, sericulture industry was specially developed in Bengal by the East India Company because during the Napoleonic wars when the regular supply of raw silk from Italy to England was cut off, this industry was fostered by the Company in Bengal. The artificial nature of the growth is shown by the fact that, as soon as the Company withdrew their active support (in 1836), the industry began at once to decay. (*Gadgil Industrial Evolution of India*).

5. The Board was not sufficiently mindful of its great responsibilities and was not strong enough to make the Company discharge its duties to the people of India. On the other hand, as a result of the negligence of the Court, no measures were adopted to guard against drought or famine, although such calamities must have cast their shadows before. When famine broke out in 1770, millions of people died, pestilence spread all over the land and agriculture and industry were very seriously affected. It is said that the worst effects of it lasted about two decades. But even in this condition the Government failed to provide relief to the sufferers. On the contrary, far from tackling the situation in a humane way, the Company was only looking to its own interests and even discriminatory acts continued.
6. "It is not in human nature for any race of men to sacrifice its own interests for those of another; and British statesmen in the early years of the 19th century did all they could to promote British industries at the sacrifice of Indian industries. British manufactures were forced into India through the agency of the Company's Governor-General and commercial residents while Indian manufacturers were shut out of England by prohibitive tariffs . . ." (*Economic History of India* by R.C. Dutt)
7. "The private export trade from Bengal to London had phenomenally increased during the 20 years between 1777 and 1797." (*Trade and Finance in Bengal Presidency 1793 to 1833* by Amal Tripathi.). With private merchants entering foreign trade, it began to expand very fast. British imports of cotton twist into India in 1824 weighed 121,000 pounds, and they rose to 4 million lbs in 1828. Copper, lead, glass, iron and woollen goods were also imported and British manufactures were imported into Calcutta "on payment of a small duty of 2½ per cent while import of Indian manufactures into England on various articles were put under very high rates even upto 400 per cent on their value." (R.C. Dutt, op cit p. 202)
8. See Explanatory note 3 (Minto's Minute), p. 21.
9. In 1792-93 also, Wilberforce and Grant strongly advocated for despatch of schoolmasters to India and carried resolution in Parliament to that effect but they were not allowed by the Charter of 1793.
10. Extracts of letter from the Court of Directors to Governor-General regarding the reform of Benares Sanskrit College and the establishment of colleges at Nuddea and Tirhut (1814).
Paragraph 70 : Lord Minto recommended towards the conclusion of his Minute that three new colleges (besides those already existing in Calcutta which he proposed to reform) shall be founded for the

benefit of the Mohammedan population in the provinces immediately subject to your Government. The execution however of this part of the plan was . . . deferred.

Paragraph 71 : . . . We have besides strong doubts of the policy of the British Government in India employing active means to perpetuate and propagate in that country those languages which were introduced into it . . . as relics of a domination from which they have been . . . long since liberated.

11. Rammohun suddenly rose to eminence in 1809 when he showed unique courage and sense of dignity in the incident which took place between him (he was then merely *sheristadar*) and the District Magistrate of Bhagalpur. On this incident Rammohun wrote a petition to the Governor-General. (Appendix I)

Political and Cultural Condition of Bengal in the 18th Century

TURNING our attention to the imperial throne of Delhi and to the ruling chief of the Subah of Bengal and to the subsequent role foreigners played in India, we find that after Aurangzeb's death Badshah Bahadurshah was on the throne in Delhi with Murshid Kuli Khan, Subedar of Bengal and Ram-mohun's great grandfather Krishna Chandra Roy holding a high position (the title Roy was conferred on him by the Badshah). Murshid Kuli Khan was succeeded by Nawab Alivardi Khan. Then came Shah Alam as Emperor of Delhi and Najm-ud-Daula as Nawab of Bengal.

Shah Alam's historic *firman* of 1765 bestowed on the East India Company the *Dewani* of Bengal *Subah* by which the *subah* was to be the security for regular payment of tribute, amounting to Rs. 2.6 million a year, by the Nawab to the Emperor and the Company was to assume responsibility for maintaining the defence of the *subah*. It was also agreed that the *Nizamat* should retain Rs. 5.3 million yearly for itself and that the balance of Bengal revenues should go to the Company. From this agreement between the Company, the *Nizamat* and the Emperor, it is evident to what a low level the Emperor and the Nawab of Bengal *Subah* had sunk. Both proved themselves incompetent to govern and were also averse to governing their kingdom.

Acceptance of these terms, in course of time, became the thin end of the wedge and the East India Company gradually became the virtual ruler of Bengal by establishing its authority beyond challenge and winning people's confidence by bringing law and order with deliberate plans. After the battle of Plassey (1757) and particularly after the *firman* received from the Badshah, the traders other than the British, viz., Portuguese,¹ Danes,² Dutch³ and French⁴ found themselves in a very bad way and began to lose their trading facilities. These Europeans were from a long time past carrying on trade all over Bengal. The Portuguese played the most important role in Bengal's life in different ways and they had important centres at different places, e.g., Sandwip, Noakhali, Chittagong, Hijli, Hooghly, Saptagram, Jessore, Barisal, Dacca; the Dutch settled at Chinsura and made important centres of trade at Kassimbazar, Patna, etc., the French settled at Chandernagore mainly; ultimately the Dutch had to lose Chinsura to the British and took Java instead. The French remained in Chandernagore until recently when it was handed over to the Government of India. With the exception of these pockets the entire region of Bengal came into the hands of the English within a short time, and they began to organise a strong and progressive administration. This easy win of the British was possible because the Muslims in Bengal, in the middle of the eighteenth century were so badly involved in internal quarrels, intrigues and all kinds of foul play amongst themselves that they could not offer any united resistance to the British. The Muslim rulers had hardly taken any interest in any progressive measures or in the well-being of their subjects. Even in administration, they had hardly given any thought. These so-called rulers, muslim by faith, were busy in cliques and intrigues for their own gains and thus the entire country was a battlefield of personal ambitions which inevitably led to enmities of all kinds ending in bloodshed among themselves. In these circumstances, the internal security of the country was marked by its complete absence and the people lived in constant fear, for there was hardly any law and order but only oppression, plunder and assassination. This was the last stage of muslim rule in Bengal in the mid-eighteenth century when for power and position, greed and gain, all quarrels came to a head and the battle of Plassey was fought

which brought the end of Muslim rule in Bengal and the British came to power.

In the other parts of India, the powers like the Marathas, Rajputs and Sikhs were also deeply involved in all kinds of factions and feuds, small or big. The Marathas, apart from being good fighters, were also looters (when not engaged in warfare). They used to loot for their own sustenance and also for carrying on future warfare. They (known in Bengal as *Bargis*⁷) used to overrun Bengal in a furious and barbarous manner plundering the villages and doing all kinds of devastations. From these aggressions Calcutta could protect herself only by defensive measures and that is why a circular ditch was dug around Calcutta called Maratha-Ditch. The Sikhs constantly involved themselves in fights with Muslims and the Rajput chieftains fought among themselves and also against the Muslims. The Marathas, Rajputs and the Sikhs, though well-known as fighters, devoted very little attention to the common people's general welfare. What was worse was that these powers were not united at any time even to defend their motherland from being attacked by foreign powers and they were fighting among themselves so constantly and weakened themselves so much that it was not at all difficult for a foreign power to take advantage of their disunity. The British specially, commanding superior resources and proven efficiency, took possession of territory after territory and, within a few years, the entire country (only some states remaining in charge of native rulers).

Clive became the first Governor (1757-1760) of Bengal. With the spread of European influence, some peace descended on the land, and with it, some law and order. The light of European education, new ideas of social development and political training which came to Bengal first with the rule of the British, percolated to the other regions of India as they began to be annexed to the British territories.

Clive's first governorship came to an end in 1760. After the Company secured the *Dewani* of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa in 1765, he ruled the province for the second time till 1767. He

then left the Company's service after making a clear-cut territorial demarcation recognised by law. His great contribution was to ensure the loyalty of the army to the administration and make the civil service less arrogant and more helpful, but he could not weed out corruption. Still, on the whole, the administration of Bengal became much cleaner and more efficient. Even then, a large amount of internal security measures had to be taken in the absence of which a terrible famine⁶ broke out in the province in 1770 during the reign of Verelst and Cartier (upto 1772). As a result of this, Bengal was seriously under-populated for about two generations and the worst economic consequences followed.⁷

The socio-economic system was severely shaken and this seriously affected the Company's revenues and this was the reason of the financial crisis of 1772, when Warren Hastings became the Governor of Bengal. These were very difficult times in India, and Clive's impeachment was going on in Parliament. A parliamentary inquiry severely criticised Clive's first governorship (1757-60). In 1773 the inquiry ended, not only exonerating Clive but praising his services. The strain through which he had passed was, however, too severe, and he committed suicide towards the end of 1774.

After the Regulating Act of 1773, Hastings became Governor General in 1774. This elevation increased the personal animosities, particularly between him and Philip Francis, one of the four councillors of the Governor-General. Hastings was experiencing severe mental tension, and suddenly a new trouble arose. Maharaj Nandakumar accused Hastings of accepting a large bribe from Munni Begum for appointing her the guardian of the young Nawab. This charge came handy to the councillors who were strongly opposed to Hastings. Hastings knew that a charge of forgery made by a Calcutta merchant was there at that time against Nandakumar, who was later tried by the Supreme Court and extreme punishment of death, unknown to the Muslim law then prevailing, was passed in 1775.

Hastings has been described as a man with a lucid and vigorous mind and skilled in tactful and adroit methods of dealing

with people in official matters. Glowing tributes have been paid to him by some eminent historians. His governorship was marked by more ennobling features than those of war and politics. His long residence in Bengal, his association with Bengali cultural traditions under the shadow of the Mughal culture of Delhi, had kindled oriental tastes in him which helped the acquisition of oriental learning and a sympathetic attitude towards the people he governed.

Hastings, with an air of authority, and by his cultural interests and understanding of the people, by his long tenure of office came nearer to the heart of the people than any of the other pre-mutiny British rulers. His name became a legend, passing into popular folklore, his exploits were even celebrated in popular verse. Almost alone of the early rulers, he showed an appreciation of India's cultural progress and comprehended the political and commercial issues of the time. All these made him so popular that people did not care to take into account his dark side; his oppression of some nobilities and extortions from others were supposed to be in the interest of State-finance. What was unique in him was that he sought to understand Indian culture since he knew that sound administration was not possible without knowing the people. Hastings knew Persian, the Court language, and Bengali, the local language, had a working knowledge of Urdu and Arabic. Thus his popularity was unquestioned.

He took special interest in cultural work and he encouraged Halhed in his work in Hindu law, based on a Persian translation from the Sanskrit made by the *pundits*. He encouraged Wilkins in his Sanskrit studies and sponsored his translation of the *Gita*. When Sir William Jones, a Persian and Arabic scholar, joined the Supreme Court, Hastings encouraged his interest in Sanskrit and supported the foundation of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1784. He was equally interested in Islamic culture and earlier founded the Muslim *madrassah* or college of Arabic studies in Calcutta in 1781.⁸ He encouraged Rennell in the production of his Bengal Atlas in 1781 and sent two expeditions to Tibet. By his patronage of ancient learning, by his political vigour and subtlety, and by his continuance of

the traditional methods of administration, by means of some control of corruption, Hastings placed himself in the line of the great Indian monarchs. He was very much in tune with the country's needs and aspirations for which no one was better loved. The political affairs of Bengal so long in an ugly form needed a strong and sympathetic hand and in spite of inadequacies assumed a coherent shape as a result of strong and efficient administration except for a few extortions carried out under financial pressure and political expediency. Rammohun was a boy when Hastings was completing his regime.

In Indian India, nothing but social instability and political disturbance could be seen at that time. The internecine warfare in the southern, western and northern parts of the country presented a gloomy picture. The period 1772 to 1800 was marked in these regions by sickening events which involved at different times great military figures like Shah Alam of Delhi, Mirza Najaf Khan, the great Mughal, Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan of Mysore, Maratha chief Raghunath Rao and Nana Phadnavis, Scindia's military chief Madho Rao and the Sikh soldier and statesman Ranjit Singh of Lahore.

These great military figures and statesmen, who could any day take the highest place in history for their valour, had a tragic tale to tell, and that was lack of unity and understanding among themselves. On the other hand, the British, because of good organisation, discipline and specially due to the strength of expanding economy based on developing trade carried on by them, had a great advantage over all of them. The British therefore gradually gained ascendancy over others in these regions of India. It took a long time for these states to take up educational and cultural activities seriously. There was hardly a man in these warring states who could look beyond India towards the western world, which was developing very quickly with new techniques of science and technology and in all departments of human activities.

Western Light enters Bengal

In spite of a very early start of formal education, specially

in the golden age of the Gupta period, Bengal had to contend with special difficulties because the orthodox people of all strata of the society carried a big load of Hindu rites mixed with relics of Buddhist and Tantric influences from several centuries past. In spite of all this, the light of western learning had a great beneficial effect on Bengali society, although some modern writers slightly described it as "colonial" culture.⁹ The progress expected was, however, hampered by some orthodox opinions in the community. Against this, it was Rammohun who made all efforts to reform the society and to march forward by discarding polytheistic practices and also imbibing the best of western culture. His basic stand on religion as a Hindu was to follow *Vedanta*, specially monotheism (taking up the main current of all the Upanishads in their totality) and to advance towards the cultural unity of the people of India, which according to him, had to be the precursor of political unity.

The Muslim population of Bengal had greater social solidarity and they had the additional advantage of being monotheist and their rituals were much less exacting and elaborate and on the whole, much less a burden. It is surprising that the Muslims, even though they were provided with *maqtabs* and higher educational facilities, did not still show as much enthusiasm for education as the Hindus did. The result was that the Muslims could not take immediately the benefits of British contact and India had to go ahead with this great handicap.

In 1784 came Pitt's India Act. Demands of the state to assume responsibility for reforms were growing stronger, with humanitarianism finding support from the Evangelicals (a few missionaries who came to Bengal and Madras and other places much earlier were already in the country). The Evangelists and the Humanitarians made honest efforts to liberalise the provisions of the Charter contemplated but the opposition was not negligible. At about that time, i.e., in the nineties of the 18th century, "the idea was quite strong in England that through Christian teaching and western learning, the Indians would learn ideas that would cause them to throw off their

allegiance to Great Britain''. But Grant (came again to India in 1797) in spite of these views and sentiments of a section of people in England, continued his own efforts for spreading christian influence to uplift the people and improve the general standard. Grant was a strong conservative but he had a genuine desire to educate and liberalise the people of Bengal. He felt convinced that Indian people badly needed ethical teaching under Christian influence and secular training under missionary school masters. There was no doubt that Bengal made substantial progress towards liberalisation of her views on life and it did not play a mean part in the renaissance that followed.

It will be noted that long before this and even before Pitt's India Act, a new life was glimmering through the intellectual output of some civilians; not only that, the British administrator Cornwallis meant to stabilise the economic life of Bengal by Permanent Settlement, while Wellesley gave a great impetus to intellectual output through a batch of young civilians. Even at this time the British Government did not relax the emigration policy, lest the pledge of religious neutrality to India be violated.

After Rammohun's return from his first wanderings abroad in about 1794, he, under the influence of his father, busied himself with the affairs of the family estate. But it looks from his half-hearted interest in estate-management, that as a result of his study of scriptures during this period of four years, a strong inclination for Vedantic worship occupied his mind and he must have felt that a big task awaited him in regard to the effective way of educating the masses of Indian people and reviving their special heritage. Here was the first touch of renaissance and here was the first man of the soil to radiate the light in all directions.

Renaissance

Renaissance is a reawakening of the learning of the past, to be understood in the context of the present and to be applied to remodel the future. It is a new vision, a new

consciousness of man's role in society. All this gives fresh emphasis to man's intellectual possibilities, its directions and repercussions. It is a recognition of man as an instrument in changing the society to the desired state and society in its turn enlarging man's cultural horizon. This growing emphasis on man leads to larger humanism. It should be clear that renaissance and reformation are not synonymous terms—nor have they the relation of cause and effect, but they are intimately connected. Reformation is more a quality of the mind and has its impress on society, whereas renaissance conveys the idea of movement of the spirit together with mind. It is the spirit which lends colour to renaissance.

In different countries renaissance has taken different forms. In some it has taken the form mainly of art or literature or science, philosophy and theology, or music, or architecture, and in others a combination of some of these. Thus we see in Italy the classics revived with the rising sense of nationalism and Florence giving birth, in the mid-15th century, to some geniuses in art and architecture. Literature and philosophy revived in France, and so did the sciences. In England, literature, philosophy, theology revived and new sciences came to be introduced. In Germany and the neighbouring regions, interest in philosophy revived and music grew in a special way, while in India, literature, indology, philology and art revived and the sciences made a beginning. Thus the renaissance began in Europe in the 15th century and lasted more than four centuries. In India, the Bengal-renaissance came in the seventies of the 18th century and continued till almost the seventies of 20th century which means, in the total, about two centuries.

Bengal Renaissance

The first stage of Bengal renaissance (1774-1800) was inspired by a group of civilians in Calcutta under the inspiration and patronage of Warren Hastings. This group of civilians in Calcutta, for the first time, revived India's past. These civilians were fairly elderly and included Halhed, Wilkins, Colebrooke, Sir William Jones, etc., most of whom

worked from 1774 (others later) to about 1800. Lord Cornwallis took over as Governor-General in 1786. This group of intellectual British civilians¹⁰ did the pioneering work of unearthing the classics of the East on Indian philology, history, archaeology etc. translating Sanskrit and Pali texts with annotations and placing them before the world. This was the first stage of the rebirth of India through the so-called Bengal renaissance because all researches were done in Bengal (Calcutta). It will be seen that no Bengalee or Indian was associated with the first group of scholars in this task. It is an undisputed fact that the nature of this reawakening was somewhat unorthodox for invariably, renaissance takes place by the work of the people of the soil who naturally must be the ones to do this national work in a national spirit. Awakened to the hidden treasures of the hoary past, this fascinating work attracts scholars from different places. Here, in India, the case was different. Some Englishmen were found to be keen to work on Sanskrit texts while they would serve the East India Company. Within a short time of their stay in Calcutta they picked up Sanskrit after which it was possible for them to continue their research. Some had to work on Latin translations or even Persian translations. With the Indian Sanskrit scholars in Calcutta, the difficulty was that they were taking time to pick up English sufficiently well to be of substantial help to the British youngmen. Hence it was found that men belonging to the soil were neither ready nor much interested, since there was no such tradition in India of this kind of translating work, for educating the public. The first group of British civilians not only did their work with singular devotion, broad mind and large sympathies but also brought a new outlook on India's past experiences and thoughts which remained buried till this time. The Indian thinkers seldom thought of publicity because that was not the Indian tradition—authorship used to be kept unknown in many instances.

In 1786, Cornwallis began his administration in a very different way, which did not help the further advance of intellectual life of Bengal but he did not go back on the commitments of his predecessor. He was careful enough to remember that Charles Grant was watching affairs in India

as a responsible official in Britain. He, therefore, tried to keep Grant always on his right. Unlike Hastings, he followed a bureaucratic policy of a very narrow type and treated the people he governed with suspicion. This was clearly reflected in the exclusion of Indians from all higher government posts. Besides, it was apparent that wherever possible, he would adopt British models without much circumspection. It may, however, be said to his credit that some of the models adopted very largely justified themselves. Cornwallis gave his intense thought on land reforms of Bengal which was an epoch-making achievement on which the stability of Bengal's economy and its prosperity depended. With all its drawbacks, it was a great work for all times. While he was vigilant on this matter, attention was not diverted from what he thought was a big educational step. This important step was to bring Jonathan Duncan to Calcutta from Benares where he held the charge of Benares Sanskrit College upto 1792 and also as Resident-in-charge. Between Cornwallis and Sir John Shore, twelve years (1786-98) passed and during this period no special progress was seen on the cultural side of Bengal but the educational advancement brought about by Duncan will remain as a great achievement. It will be seen that no noteworthy cultural change took place in India until Wellesley.

The second stage of Bengal renaissance covered roughly a period 1800-1830. It was, therefore, with Wellesley's taking over administration that revival of interest in the work, begun by Hastings, took place. It was a great idea of Wellesley to have started Fort William College (in 1800) where research work was resumed by a young batch of bright civilians¹¹ on various branches of learning. He wanted them to learn Sanskrit, Persian, Bengali, Urdu and Hindi and required them to investigate the ancient works on philosophy and astronomy and other sciences that took birth and developed in ancient India. Some civilians made remarkable progress in this direction and brought out research papers throwing light on the past simultaneously with the training for civil service. The contribution of the Serampore Baptist Mission group, though not connected at all with the college, also requires to be mentioned

in connection with renaissance in this period. This second group of civilians took up the centuries-old, almost-forgotten literatures on social thinking, philosophy, religion and Hindu law for translations and annotations by same people working under the East India Company. Translations went on up to the early 19th century, first into English and then some into French and German.

Both groups worked in Bengal, the second upto almost the end of the second decade of the 19th century. It was indeed a rebirth of the Hindu classics in the English language largely, which revealed, for the first time, the ancient Hindu life, thought and intellectual achievements. This group produced unique work under the patronage of Wellesley through Persian¹² and Latin translations. Of these men, Wilson^{12a} rose to eminence. This period (1800-1830) may be specially assigned to Rammohun Roy, the only Indian who fully dedicated his life to social work and high ideas.

Rammohun knew, after 1795 that the first batch (Wilkins, Jones, Colebrooke, etc.) had been working on India's accumulated materials of the past and one can surmise that his admiration for this group of investigators gave him some incentive to go to Benares for study to equip himself. When the second batch was working in the Fort William College (from 1800 roughly), Rammohun on return from Benares was in service having made contacts with Woodford, Digby (1803-1804). He was the only Bengalee or the only Indian who saw the new possibilities, as a result of western light being thrown upon ancient Indian history and thought, Indian inscriptions, ancient algebra, trigonometry, astronomy, geography, etc., however elementary they might have been. He must have also felt that for any sustained work, financial resources would be vital and therefore, decided to take service (preferably under Europeans). During this period of service (partly in private service and some period in company's service) he picked up extensive experience in land-assessment and in the problems of the cultivators, rent collectors and also judicial affairs as carried on in the country.

At Rangpur, he devoted himself, besides helping Digby in his official work, to the work of translating the *Upanishads*. Thus towards the end of his service-career he worked on the materials collected in Benares over a period of about four years at a stretch. His efforts to imbibe European thought during this period were of incalculable benefit. All these were reflected in the translations and also on the *Precepts* which he wrote long after in 1820. The translations of the sacred books brought out the original purity of Hindu thoughts of ancient times and he stressed what must have been superimposed, age after age, to show how the simple and rational practices and beliefs could be revived and the irrational practices refined and refashioned to bring fresher thoughts into the society. It was in this way that he thought that it would be possible to reopen the closed Hindu society. He also felt that the Hindu society, coming out of its shell, should be more and more secularised. He also felt that for a larger life, a literature through the mother-tongue (in this case Bengali) was an important requisite. The best in man can only come out through one's mother-tongue and for this purpose, Rammohun put his best efforts in bringing out the Vedanta in Bengali as well as in Hindi and also in English. Rammohun felt Hindu Bengal should take part in all sectors of human activity, specially social, economic and political. That his vision was clear, in favour of all-round progress through the mother-tongue, was undoubted, otherwise, he would not have laboured so much for relegating Sanskrit to the background, thus incurring the displeasure of the entire Brahmin *pundit* community and the old educated Bengal. Likewise, he wanted scholars and intellectual leaders of other parts of India to raise themselves to a higher level by such translations into their own languages (Hindi, etc.), so that the scriptures and also the classics which abound in ennobling thoughts and ideals came easily within the reach of not only scholars but also of common people. He also felt that by these means much of the irrational religious practices would be eliminated and secularisation would be achieved within a reasonable time.

These were the writings of Rammohun to bring the intelligent and literate section to realise that their labours should

be directed to more useful work. Rammohun was therefore absorbed in dreams of cultural elevation. Unlike Mrityunjay Vidyalankar who had been writing for purposes of the British civilians of the Fort William college Rammohun wanted to elevate his people to a higher ethical and religious plane. These writings and the Atmiya Sabha deliberations were to awaken India to its future possibilities. The writings aimed at not only Hindus but also others specially the Christians and Muslims. Unfortunately some groups of Christians of India took exception to his writings on Christianity. His views through these writings reached the people of Europe and America and they created some amount of excitement among the thinking people.

Rammohun came in touch, through Woodford and Digby, with some researchers of the second group of investigators quite late on his arrival in Calcutta sometime in 1815 and he must have heard much earlier of this group of men working in Fort William College. Also he must have heard that the College had already suffered in importance by the establishment in 1806 of Haileybury College in England where some departments had been transferred. Rammohun was outside both the college as well as the Baptist Mission Group but he was the most important contributor of learned work or the only contributor. The second group of British scholars contributed substantially through English language to Bengal Renaissance upto about 1820. On a par with their work, stand the works of Rammohun both in English and in Bengali, also in Hindi. Bengali language at that time was in a crude form and to write philosophical matters through Bengali prose was difficult. Much credit is, therefore, due to him for this interest in Indian languages particularly Bengali. Yet it must be said that much earlier than Rammohun, Carey had given the largest amount of attention to this language for his own special purpose of preaching the Bible.¹³ Carey cultivated Bengali language very well and he contributed in 1801 a Bengali grammar which would be a noteworthy performance on anybody's part. It was very much on the lines of the Bengali grammar which Halhed wrote in 1778, yet Carey's attempt was praiseworthy.¹⁴ He, being a linguist, examined the structure very carefully and

therefore he could formulate into rules, by studying the language, in respect of its syntax. Carey then began to write other prose pieces also in Bengali. His colleagues and assistants too began to write books for civil service students and hence, on the whole, Bengali literature began to be enriched.

Carey had to direct his special attention to the Fort William College (from which his sustenance came) but did no less to Baptist Mission of Serampore which badly needed Carey's income. Carey was thus very important as he was the driving force in the Indian language section of the Fort William College, as well as in the Baptist Mission. At the time of starting the college, Wellesley was desperately in need of a teacher of languages and finding no other, had to engage Carey, though he was a missionary dedicated to evangelism which was against Government policy. Carey as the central figure for languages in the college fully carried out his duties. He was all the time encouraging his colleagues in this connection. In the Serampore mission also, he made ceaseless efforts to translate the Bible into different Indian languages. When these began to come out from 1801, they not only helped missionary work but also popularised the Bengali language in spite of serious defects in the translations. The earliest writer at Fort William College was Mrityunjoy Vidyalankar but he never felt a genuine urge for Bengali. Carey was at his back all the time.

The **third stage** of Bengal Renaissance commenced two decades later (say 1850), i.e., the middle of the 19th century, when rationalist scholars, reformers, essayists, literary men, historians came one after another. They were inspired to write Bengali prose and poetry of a distinctly new type, socio-historical novels, till then unknown in India. Just prior to these rationalists, a group of young men in the later 1820's appeared obsessed by western thoughts of atheistic or agnostic nature and created a temporary commotion in the Bengali Society with their narrow and perverted outlook on Hinduism and ignoring all national and racial traditions. Soon the excitement died down but the tenets of abiding interest did influence men like Krishnamohun Banerjee, Dakshinarajan Mukherjee, Rasik Krishna Mallick, Ramtanu Lahiri,

Ramgopal Ghosh, etc. In the fifties, came contributions from Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, Akshoy Datta, Debendranath Tagore, Keshav Sen, Michael Madhusudan Dutta, Ramesh Datta, etc. Some of them were not only nationalists but were also hard rationalists whose contributions to the literary field were of high order and some of remarkable originality.

The fourth stage of the renaissance shows a remarkable outburst of reflective writings (1870) and devotional out-pourings in conjunction with mystical experiences, the quintessence of Indian thought soaring into sublime heights and peeping into the eternal mysteries of Man and Nature. Such high prose and poetry came from the poet-philosopher Rabindranath Tagore in his inspirations. These were the results of a deep dive into the mysteries of life and they gave clear indications of unfathomable feelings to which Vedanta alone can stand as witness. Simultaneously with them came supra-sensitive art from him following the achievements of master-painter of modern India Abanindranath Tagore. They were followed by less famous poets and artists, sculptors and others. This stage also saw special proclivities to modern science led by the scientists like Jagdish Bose, P.C. Roy, Raman, Saha, Bose, Khorana, etc., also to adventures, explorations, inventions etc., this stage also saw the bounds of social intercourse extended to other countries of the world. A new spirit and a new awakening of scientific and engineering knowledge extended the intellectual horizon still further. Thus the Bengal Renaissance may be considered to have covered a period of about 200 years (1770-1970).

European Renaissance and Indian Renaissance

Though the two differ in many details having had their emergence in two different continents, at two different periods of time and under two completely different sets of circumstances (the former spontaneously and the other by contact with western culture), still there is the essential sameness of growth being the unfolding of the same human mind. For this purpose, it will be necessary to show the landmarks in gradual growth of European renaissance. The first landmark was the revival of antiquity through translations from Greek and Latin

into Italian and other European languages in the 15th century: the second landmark was the secularisation of all spheres of human activities, together with full appreciation of the vital role of science and technology; the third landmark was the emphasis on humanism, which signified the sovereignty of man or in other words, man as the maker of his own destiny and man as the highest court of appeal; and the fourth was newness or modernity in attitudes, a new concept of man's unfolding and finally a new expression of personality. All these led to emphasis on freedom to man, to deny which, would be tantamount to a sin against his Maker. These features are to be seen in the Bengal renaissance also.

These are the elements or characteristics of the European Renaissance. The illustrious writer on the Italian Renaissance Jacob Burckhardt writes, "that Italy of the 14th and 15th centuries witnessed the emergence of a secular concept of the state, the state as a work of art; a stress on the development of the individual, i.e., a new attention to fame, glory". This renaissance appeared in different regions of Europe with varying emphasis, some on philosophy and literature, some on science and technology, some on religion and theology keeping the secular side intact and others in arts, explorations and adventures. It was achieved in Italy through Columbus, Da Vinci, Machiavelli, Raphael, Michelangelo, Galileo; in England through Bacon, Locke, Newton, Darwin, Bentham, Ricardo, Malthus, etc., in Germany through Luther, Kepler, Marx, Freud, etc; in France through Descartes, Rousseau, Voltaire, etc.; elsewhere through Erasmus etc.

Turning to Renaissance in India, as has been stated earlier, the two European batches including Carey, were followed by Rammohun Roy, Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, Akshoy Datta, Debendranath Tagore, Keshab Sen, Bankim Chatterjee, Michael Madhusudan, Ramesh Datta, etc.; and after about two decades the great galaxy with Rabindranath Tagore, Jagdish Bose, P.C. Roy, Vivekananda, Sarat Chatterjee followed by Abanindranath Tagore, and other artists, sculptors, scientists and Everest-explorer Ten Sing. etc,

Rammohun's End of Service-Career—Entry into Public Life

Since the above is a historical coverage of developments over a long period, we should come back to the 1810's when Rammohun was changing his service-career (Government and private) to public life as a social reformer and an intellectual stalwart. He was then about 40 years old, already fairly well-off and well-equipped in India's past and present history, also quite up-to-date in the current affairs of Europe. From the beginning of his return to Calcutta in 1815, Rammohun was engaged in multi-sided activities particularly in reviving Upanishadic studies, initiating all kinds of progressive measures for India. He realised that the people of India should not only know their essential teachings of Vedanta but also the best of Christian and Muslim teachings. To understand it, a new spirit for a full assimilation was necessary—not only intellectual assimilation but assimilation of the inner spirit and if anything more, a clear realisation.

Indian Scriptures interpreted in modern spirit (may be called Spiritual Renaissance)

Rammohun began the stupendous work of annotating the Upanishads with a view to make it clear enough for easy comprehension of the fairly well-read men by complete abjuration of the abstraction so long blocking the way to the assimilation of India's thoughts. Rammohun's efforts marked, for the first time, a process of realisation of the inner spirit of the sacred texts and of preparations to absorb the essentials of Hinduism in its pristine form. The sacred Sanskrit texts with annotations of Upanishadic scholars added from age to age according to their own subjective idealism and individual propensities at last received, at Rammohun's hands a simple objective treatment for the first time with complete negation of polemics. In the past, purely subjective attitude brought insincerity to life and such annotations made Hindu life wholly mechanical. Rammohun felt that nothing less than a radical outlook, devoid of all fanciful abstractions, was the only way to understand the real spirit of the scriptures. He felt that the objectives and the ideals of Hinduism could be achieved only by a straight-

forward approach together with a deep attachment for the highest values of life. He, for the first time, saw that the demands of life required simplification and actual objective fulfilment. The objective advancement first found expression in the demand by Rammohun for utilitarian educational facilities (his famous letter to Lord Amherst in 1823). While Rammohun wanted his annotations to be easily assimilable, his objective was to achieve clarity without losing the essence of the subject matter—this task, fully done, would be a unique achievement for a fuller comprehension of the scriptures and would then have an educative and sobering influence wherever the Hindu scriptures were followed. This he realised very clearly because he found that the philosophical and religious writings of the past were so complex, complicated and abstruse that they did not lead a reader or an enquirer to any concrete thought-current or to any clear line of intellectual advancement. Till Rammohun gave a new outlook, the society was fully immersed in a queer admixture of ceremonialism combined with mysterious innovations. In effect, this was the intense medievalism which had reigned for a few hundred years in orthodox Hindu Society and this badly needed a full screening since rationality and clarity, indicative of objective existence, were markedly absent—this screening marked the new birth of the entire range of Indian scriptures. It would be an awakening into a new spiritual world with meaningful performances, it would be a realisation of simple and spiritual truths and ethical sublimities; it would be a renaissance of a new order where scriptures were no longer polemical, abstruse and abstract but gave clear injunction for uplift of man and society. The Bengal savant Bipin Chandra Pal (1858-1931) whose deep insight into the philosophy of religion was unquestioned, paid a great tribute to Rammohun describing him as the only Indian philosopher and only reformer who understood the reactionary forces of Indian medievalism and found in his writings and in the movements initiated and started by him in the society, the only way of removing medievalism. Pal, in his own way, described medievalism in the following extracts :

- (1) "The abstract universalism of the popular Vedantic schools, which, denying all marks, notes, distinctions

or differentiations in the Divine Entity, practically propounds a kind of veiled agnosticism on the one hand and emphasises the abstraction of the senses from their objects, of the mind from thinking, of the emotions from feeling, of the will from acting, of man from society as methods of spiritual culture on the other hand. Thus, even without the auline doctrine of all flesh being corruption this Hindu medievalism, from another standpoint, passed the same condemnation against all human instincts and all human desires, however legitimate these might be;"

- (2) "The prevailing ceremonialism which abstracts thought from feeling, reason from life, religion from theology and reduces the religious life of the people to a round of external observances, and even in its higher types to a system of unethical disciplines;"
- (3) "A kind of chaotic homogeneity of the different departments of life's activities. Differentiation and autonomy, the essential conditions of healthy evolution, become impossible under the influence of this medievalism—Religion, or more correctly speaking theology and ritualism, usurp the functions of the different organs of social and civic life, and everything is thought to be regulated and controlled by the fanciful abstractions and a-priori assumptions of the priest's code. This medievalism sets up a false ideal of religion as an incubus on every department of a people's life, whether economic and industrial or political and legal or educational and social. And after the earlier and more primitive stages are passed, no true progress in any of these departments becomes impossible unless the incubus of religious dogmas and disciplines is removed from them, and they are granted the fullest autonomy and freedom of movement along their own legitimate lines of development. (*Death Centenary Volume*).

It will remain eternally to the credit of Rammohun that it was he who, for the first time, felt the benumbing effect of

medievalism, as he found India in the worst fetters of superstitions, mechanical observances, meaningless performances which bore no rational significance. When he stood against these medieval forces, the worst opposition came from the orthodox leaders of the country.

By this time, British administrators had already made a headway in the cultural field of Bengal and produced a galaxy of British scholars (Jones, Colebrooke, Prinseps, Wilkins and others) who had started the study of subjects which threw light on the Hindu cultural heritage. They engaged themselves in rebuilding in English works on the accumulated materials of ancient thought, so long available only in an abstruse form in old Sanskrit (from the originals, some translated into Persian). Such civilians were, however, very small in number, all the others showed greater interest in trade and commerce. Within a decade, a completely different atmosphere was created in Bengal through the very small cultural sector under the strict but helpful administration of Hastings. This cultural rejuvenation was possible because Hastings was not only sympathetic but also the inspirer of these young writers for increasing participation in bringing to light India's past. In Hastings' tenure of office, hardly any Bengali or Indian was associated with this work except as translators and helpers. About a decade after, in 1800, Wellesley founded Fort William College.

When intellectual activities developed at the college, some Bengalees played an important role as teachers and co-ordinators of Carey. At this time Rammohun was about 25/26 years old and had just picked up sufficient knowledge in English to understand current affairs (as he started learning English very late in life). But he was quite well acquainted in advanced Sanskrit literature and also in Sanskrit conversation. This is just to show here that Rammohun had the advantage of knowing that a group of earnest workers was engaged in research work in the Fort William College. But it was very doubtful if he met any of the workers before he had made good acquaintance with Woodford or Digby (in 1803 or 1804). The great point about this was that he made the fullest use of his

contact with the British officials whereas others did not do so. This was largely due to a strong prejudice against the British and a narrow vision among the orthodox people. What requires to be stressed is that Rammohun was not working in an altogether isolated field without any connecting link (over and above Persian as a spoken language, Sanskrit was well cultivated by all, of some standing in the Hindu society) but that he received good cooperation of some Sanskrit scholars at Kashi (Benares) where he received the training not only in Sanskrit scriptures but also in Hindi and English. There was, however, a big difference between himself and the Europeans (Harington, Mackenzie, Strachey, Malcolm Davis and others) working in the College. The Europeans worked on Latin translations by Duperron or on Persian versions (writers learnt Persian first, it being the court language) or from the original Sanskrit if they knew it. Rammohun worked very largely from Sanskrit (hand-written copies from "*Bhuryya*" or palm leaves could be made by Kashi *pundits*) and in exceptional cases he might have used Persian versions (about 50 Upanishads were translated by scholars engaged by Dara Shekoh) as they were easily available.

High Research

Earlier it has been stated that the first batch started by Warren Hastings contributed very substantially to human knowledge, through William Jones by (a) his discovery of the common source for Indo-European languages, (b) his Philosophy of History, his views on Indo-Aryan civilisation, languages, Indian Philosophy; through Colebrooke by his (a) History of Asian civilization, (b) researches on Vedas, (c) priority of Hindi to Persianized Urdu, (d) improved translation over those of Jones and Wilkins, (e) paper on Sanskrit and Prakrit languages, (f) translation of two treatises on Hindu law of inheritance, (g) philological works, (h) history on Asian civilization, (i) Sanskrit Dictionary. The second batch, started by Lord Wellesley consisted of much younger civilians whose contributions had been of high standard and their papers broke new grounds which was a unique achievement. In this connection, special mention can be made of the following men :

William Jones may be quoted with special reference to his *Third Annual Discourse* where it had been recorded that the Hindus of their time, however degenerate today, were splendid in arts and arms, happy in Government, wise in legislation and eminent in various knowledge etc.

In this connection, it is only fair to say that Colebrooke was probably the profoundest scholar who was associated with the best of the works on Hindu Scriptures. It has been stated :

“Colebrooke had an equally high appreciation for Hindu learning of the past and what is important to note is that he was more precise, incisive, more thorough than others who were doing the same kind of work.”

These expressions of India's past glory must have caused much uneasiness in the minds of Charles Grant, Wilberforce, members of Clapham group of evangelists and other Utilitarians who seriously believed that only Christian influence could elevate them both morally and spiritually. They held the view that the “Hindu religion is degrading—nay, barbarous” and they firmly believed too that evangelism was the only way to elevate the morals of the people of India. On the other hand, they also knew the opinion of a section of Englishmen particularly of Henry Prinsep^{14A} and some others who having lived in India for a pretty long time became real friends of India. Prinsep's view was : “to expect to make converts of the natives of India was an idle, absurd and unpracticable object.”

Another group of Europeans who were culturally inclined was found to be the followers of Jones, Colebrooke and so on who did a remarkable lot of researches on the ancient thoughts and writings. Some of them have been so suggestively presented to the world that further light would give new food for thought and investigation. Another group belonged to the Baptist missionary circles led by Carey and Marshman and Ward. These groups came in contact with upper and middle class Hindu gentry and their mode of living and thinking were imbued with a high sense of appreciation of the ancient culture of India. Among the Baptists, Carey was a unique

figure who had a steadfast devotion to his aims without having a prejudiced view of Hindu life and ideals. Marshman the educationist with a good background of the classics and Ward a great printer and publisher were there to help Carey in their objectives. They wanted to work out their programme which were outlined at the beginning. They started in Serampore then under Danes, missionary and educational activities, translated the Bible into various Indian languages, and undertook publishing in non-British territory as these activities were even in the 1790's not permissible in British India. They found the Government of India (Wellesley was Governor-General) strongly against mission work and conversion to Christianity in British territory. Carey felt very despondent on this score and wrote letters to his friends in the Baptist Mission Society in England expressing his great disappointment at not being able to publish translations of the Bible.

Events sometimes move in an unexpected way--in this case, in a very favourable way which brought light to all-round darkness. When Carey sat despondent at Serampore, a messenger from Claudius Buchanan, Vice-Provost of the Fort William College, came with the message that William Carey was requested to see Buchanan at Calcutta. The meeting took place on the day previous to the opening of the College and Carey was offered the professorship in Bengali in that College. With the establishment of this College, Carey's aspirations and the Baptist Mission's future took a distinctly bright turn. Relations between the Government and the Mission became friendly because without Carey the language classes at Fort William would have languished and the services of Ward and Marshman would not have been available. As Carey gave his best efforts to Bengali, Sanskrit and Oriya among other Indian tongues, Marshman spared no pains in spreading education among those around him.

Thus while the college started with the happy acquisition of an expert linguist, the Baptist Mission must have felt specially favoured by divine grace that regular monthly income would be available for the first time. The three got a new life and saw a glimpse of success in their mission. Its outstanding advantage

was the very friendly and helpful attitude from then on of the Governor-General to propagating the Christian faith among the common people of India. This meant that although there was a ban on such activity in the Sanad of 1793, Wellesley overlooked it in the interests of the continued progress of research at Fort William and thus gave the missionaries an opportunity to continue their religious work. This indirect help was very insignificant and therefore the task remained almost as before. Carey was spreading education in his way but he knew that the real solution for him lay in (a) evangelical movement and (b) secular training. Ward observing their own performance wrote :

“They had succeeded in settling four stations in Bengal; they had sent a missionary to Patna, and planted stations on the borders of Orissa and Bhootan and in Burmah; the number of members in church fellowship exceeded 200; they had obtained a footing in Calcutta, where a chapel had been erected at a cost of more than Rs. 3,000, and a large church and congregation collected; the scriptures had been printed, in whole or in part, in six languages.”

One characteristic trait in him (natural too for Carey who was born in a poor and lowly family) marked him out from the rest of his colleagues was that he had a cosmopolitan outlook and an open heart for people of all strata particularly for the people who, for want of guidance and means, could do nothing as members of their society. Unlike other westerners, he had a strong conviction that these people could only rise through cultivating their own language and could improve their living conditions only by improving their economic and cultural organisation and not by borrowing a language from the West or by imitating the mode of living of other nations.

Grant and Wilberforce

This was the fundamental difference between Carey on one side and Grant^{1-1b} and Wilberforce on the other. They were strong evangelists and surely had a good deal of sympathy for the

uplift of the common people, but they held firmly the view that this was possible only through the English language, English institutions and Christianity. It was a ridiculous obsession with them that without adopting Christian ways, their real uplift was impossible. This being their ideas, it was natural for the Company's top officials to feel not only uneasy but extremely disturbed in mind that British intellectuals in the Indian services were undergoing their "own Indianisation" instead of anglicising the Indians through Christian influences. Strong antagonism grew up on this issue between Wellesley (Governor General) in India and Charles Grant in England. Grant was so much in favour of a gradual shift from the policy of the rulers in Bengal that he decided to move to Haileybury, England, the European part of the Fort William College curriculum.

Decline of Fort William College

This was the beginning of the decline in importance of the Fort William College. As long as it was a centre where civilians produced research papers based on old texts in Sanskrit, Persian and Urdu on *Dharmasastra*, history, ancient geography, Hindu algebra, Hindu astronomy, Buddhism, Jainism and various other related subjects it was necessary to associate scholars from Bengal, Orissa and the northern and western states of India as were readily available in Calcutta, and it attracted foreign scholars. But as soon as the college ceased to perform high intellectual activities, these coordinators lost their occupation, after being cut off from the college duties and from its financial backing. There was no other institution for regular academic work where educated Bengalees and others could satisfy their inner intellectual urge. Those with an established reputation could, however, always obtain facilities and assistance from the Asiatic Society of Calcutta, but on the whole, the weakening of the college meant the weakening of the intellectual life of Bengal and therefore of India as a whole. About 20 years passed in this way, and in 1830 Bentinck completely dissolved¹⁵ the college.

In 1813, when the Charter was being renewed, Grant

vehemently opposed the proposal of ending the Company's trade monopoly on the ground that this, according to him, would also end British rule in India. But this controversy, which involved India's economic and political future did not reach all remote corners like Rangpur sufficiently well to divert Rammohun's attention as he was then engaged in the stupendous task of *Upanishad* translations, also contemplating how to bring about the desired change in the society. Besides, this controversy took place mostly in England and between the leaders of the East India Company and of the Board of Control and leaders of economic thought in favour of England like Grand, Dundas, Hastings, Cornwallis, Shore, etc. In this controversy, the interest of the shipowners and other manufacturing organisations were paramount since they were looking forward to expansion of trade. The monopoly at last ended. During the next twenty years, trade activities increased enormously and private merchants' share grew in much larger proportion. There was a marked improvement in the activities of the people and the vision of expansion of trade and industry gave a new life.

After Rammohun launched his social reform movement from 1815 and having got involved in the incidental controversies arising from the publication of *Precepts of Jesus*, he diverted his attention to economic issues from about 1812. There were also heavy demands on his time for other reasons, for immediately after the translation of the *Upanishads* and their annotations, Rammohun was entangled in family litigations which continued up to 1826. He seriously took up economic issues when British planters sought to own land in India to grow coffee and indigo.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

Note 1 : Some of the earliest British Researchers

Halhed (1751-1830)—In 1778 Halhed compiled and printed in English a *Grammar of the Bengali Language*. There was no printing press possessing a set of Bengali punches and the art of printing was unknown here. He took the fullest

advantage of what Wilkins contributed by making the Bengali types. This *Grammar* was a great achievement. As grammarian he held a unique position and was highly praised by Colebrooke. Subsequent grammars are indebted to Halhed.

Charles Wilkins (1750-1836)—He may be called the Caxton of Bengal. He was a remarkable man for he designed the elegant Bengali types and taught the art to the Bengali mechanics, thus he introduced the art of printing in Bengali and he established the first Vernacular Press in 1778. His contribution was not only unique to vernacular literature but also to the general culture of Bengal. He translated some portions of *Bhagavad Gita* in 1783. He was the librarian and custodian of oriental manuscripts which came into British hands with the fall of Srirangapatnam. He worked with Sir William Jones when the Asiatic Society of Bengal was established and his interest extended to historical topics also, for, he wrote the history of the Palas of Bengal from inscriptions. He was an F.R.S. (1788), D.C.L. of Oxford (1805).

William Jones (1746-1794)—He began his career in Bengal in 1783 as judge of the Supreme Court. At Oxford he became a proficient scholar of Persian and Arabic in 1764. In 1771 his Persian grammar was published. In 1774 his commentaries on Asian poetry was published in Latin in six volumes. In 1773 he was a member of Johnson's Club and was an important member of the Clapham group of Johnson, Gibbon, Joshua Reynolds, Burke, Sheridan, Pitt, Grant, Wilberforce, etc. On coming to India he studied Sanskrit and translated *Sakuntala* into English from Sanskrit and also translated *Laila-Majnu*. He made a study of the Vedas and specialised in the growth of languages and established the common sources for Indo-European languages. He wrote the following illuminating lines :

“The Sanskrit language, whatever be its antiquity, is of a wonderful structure more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin, and more exquisitely refined than either, yet bearing to both of them a stronger affinity both in the roots of verbs and in the form of grammar, than could

possibly have been produced by accident . . . there is a similar reason, though not quite so forcible, for supposing that both the Gothick and the Celtick, though blended with a very different idiom, had the same origin with the Sanskrit; and the old Persian might be added to the same family . . .” (*Third Annual Discourse Asiatic Researches* 1788).

Henry Colebrooke (1765-1837)—He began his career as a writer in Madras in 1783. He was brought to Calcutta as President of the Asiatic Society in 1794 on the death of Jones, and Wellesley made him a Professor of Fort William College in 1800 in charge of Sanskrit. He specialised in Vedic studies. Max Muller was so impressed by his profound knowledge that he thought “few scholars were able to go beyond Colebrooke.” In 1807 he became a member of the Supreme Council and in the same year established the Sanskrit Press. He became a Supreme Court judge in 1813. His contributions on Vedic matters were of a very high order. His famous Essay on the Vedas brought out the point of fundamental unity of Godhead. He translated *Dayabhaga* and a portion of *Mitakshara* from Sanskrit into English. His intellectual work was of a very high order.

Note 2 : William Carey

William Carey (1761-1834)—At Kettering (England) where the Baptists gathered, Carey showed a keen desire for coming to India on behalf of the Baptist mission. So as soon as he found a non-British vessel, he sailed for India with his family. He was fortunate to be able to disembark stealthily at Calcutta port in 1793. As his financial position was very low, he was in search of a cheap place in Bengal. After a short stay at Sunderbans and then at Malda for a considerable number of years (about 5 years), he came to Calcutta on his way to Serampore in January 1800 and joined Joshua Marshman, his wife, William Ward and some others who arrived there at the end of 1799. There Carey set up a small establishment and busied himself with his objectives, viz., preaching the Bible, proselytisation, rendering educational assistance and secular

training to the common people around them.

For the distinct purpose of translating the Bible in Bengali, Carey took lessons on this subject in England sometime before he started for Calcutta. He was able to make a remarkable contribution to Bengali language by his close attention to the structural side of the language and by his special grammatical—being a born-linguist.¹⁶ The Bengali translation of the *New Testament* appeared in 1801 and was generally hailed, specially by the supporters and adherents of the Baptist mission. The Sanskrit scholars of the country, however, never liked any prominence of Bengali. Mrityunjay Vidyalkar was one of them but he had to give the best help to Carey in this task as he was his subordinate in the College. Rammohun wanted that a much simpler language than Sanskrit should be the medium of education and hence when Carey brought out the *Old Testament* also in Bengali character in 1803, he appreciated Carey's work as a unique service which would popularise Bengali language quickly. Carey's interest in the language and specially the introduction of Bengali types (designed by the famous Panchanan Karmakar) was so beneficial that whatever might have been Carey's main objectives (Bible preaching and conversion work) they were wholly ignored. Overall, it was more than patent that Carey had a great love for the language and he rendered distinct service at all stages and in all circumstances.¹⁷ It is for all these reasons that Carey should be regarded as the maker of early Bengali language.

Ten or twelve years later in 1815, Rammohun published a Bengali version of some *Upanishads* with annotations which contained, for the first time, the most complex thoughts of human mind. Hence from this point of view, Rammohun should be given the credit of laying the foundation of advanced Bengali prose. This advanced Bengali prose began to gain more and more flexibility and absorbed sophisticated thoughts until today the language has attained a high position among the languages of the world. Thus Carey's contribution at the early stage and Rammohun's contribution at the later stage mark the two distinct stages of development of

Bengali. Therefore Carey and Rammohun were the two makers of Bengali language.

Note 3 : Charles Grant (1746-1823)

Charles Grant came to India in 1767 as a cadet in the Company's army. He gave up a military career as he was not keen on leading a life of this sort and had actually joined the army merely to get a free passage to India. He was nominated a writer in 1772 and appointed secretary to the Board of Trade in 1774. Charles had a brother Robert who was secretary and translator employed under the Nawab of Oudh. In 1776, on Robert's death, Charles and his children received large annuities. Charles became commercial Resident in Malda in 1778, where he became the owner of an indigo factory and carried on private trade. Towards the end of the century he became a member of the Board of Trade and thus became very influential. He later became a Director of the East-India Company, and having amassed a fortune retired to Britain in 1790. He entered Parliament in 1802 and was appointed Chairman of the Company in 1805.

Grant was an energetic member of the evangelical sect known as the Clapham Group of England. He had the closest association with India in all matters and with all Governors-General over a period of 50 years. He played a very important role in matters relating to renewal of charters, land tenures, the Company's monopoly, Fort William College, Haileybury College, the regimes of Hastings and Wellesley, revenue collection, shipping, territorial expansion and the Vellore mutiny among other things. Grant spared no pains to advance British interests in India till his death. But he also advanced India's special and educational cause to the best of his ability. Unfortunately he suffered from a strong conviction that the Indians had low morals and to raise them to the normal level what was essential was Christian teachings and secularisation. Indeed, secularisation should have been allowed by the Charter of 1793 for which both Grant and Wilberforce tried their utmost.

Grant left a record of consistent opposition to territorial

expansion in India by the Governor-General.¹⁶ He also left a record of independent policy for Indian affairs and he even did not honour a personal request from the King of England to support a motion to give Hastings a large sum of money in recognition of his services. This is why on Grant's death he was described as "So honourable, so distinguished, so pure, so long adopting a course of Christian rectitude and piety." Undoubtedly he was one of the outstanding figures among men connected with India in the early years of British rule.

Grant wrote in 1787 : (1) *Observations on the State of Society among the Asiatic Subjects of Great Britain*; (2) *Observations on Trade*; (3) *Regulations for Weavers*; and (4) *Report on Bengal Commerce*. These were laid in 1813 before the House of Commons, by whose orders they were printed. They were regarded as the ablest answer to the arguments of the anti-missionary party headed by Scott Waring and Sydney Smith.

Grant ended where Rammohun began

At that time or a couple of years after, the Company's charter was renewed in 1793, Rammohun was in charge of his father's estate. The thought uppermost in his mind must have been the question of idolatry contrasted against the high concept of monotheism. Despite the pre-occupation with this overwhelming question of reform of the Hindu Community, he was too young to divert his attention to other objectives like the political affairs of the country (which he could take up not before 1822). When Rammohun was in Rangpur, he was 38 years old and well established in official status and in education. He was then completely engrossed in reformation movement of his own community—Hindus. He now felt he had sound financial backing and he also felt that he had equal amount of confidence in himself being groomed by his civilian friends—Woodford and Digby. He was fortunate that through them he continued to be posted in national and international affairs. Since he was worried about the reformation of the Hindu society, his uppermost concern was to awaken not only the leaders of the society but also the common people to the real spirit of Hinduism and this gave him immense problems and he

soon saw that this was a matter not of one or two men but a serious band of workers. In this connection, he also realised that political and economic reforms could never be achieved unless the Hindus felt the urge to rise above ignorance, superstition, orthodoxy and irrational practices so as to acquire the great ideal of unity as a nation. He came to believe that religion was the basis of unity and this is the additional reason why he concentrated on *Vedanta*.

Note 4 : Conversion into Christianity from early times

It is surprising that Prinsep held this view. It is true that Indians would not accept another religion unless they are in a helpless condition. In the past, conversions had been extensive—from the middle of the 16th century, the Portuguese influence spread all over Bengal, specially in the Dacca side. The Roman Catholic mission did the conversion work with great force and it is said “the number of people claiming themselves to be of Portuguese descent was in the 17th century very large and Portuguese language had established itself as the lingua-franca of the country.” The Portuguese extended their activities from Balasore and Hooghly to Chittagong and Dacca. It is said that “in Bengal, there are to be found not less than eight or nine thousand families of Portugals” (according to Bernier in 1660). As a result, the Portuguese not only mixed intimately with the common people but there were extensive conversion cases.

Then came from Madras Kiernander and from Goa Bento to Bengal as protestants. Bento spent about 16 years in Calcutta and in Bandel he was a good linguist (knew French Portuguese, Bengali and Hindusthani) and he wrote a book in Bengali—*Prasnattarmala*.

Note 5 : William Wilberforce (1759-1833)

William Wilberforce was an important member of Parliament and a close associate of Charles Grant (from the eighties of the 18th century) in spreading Christianity in India. He dedicated his life to abolishing slave trade. Every year about 50,000 Africans were shipped to West Indies from Africa under

appalling conditions in which a few thousand died on the voyage and as many in the ports before being auctioned. A much larger number died in "seasoning", so that not more than half survived. Wilberforce campaigned inside and outside Parliament and was defeated in a vote in the House of Commons. When he secured a positive vote in the Commons he was defeated in the House of Lords. His campaign lasted 20 years before he succeeded in his objective.

Note 6 : Background of the Evangelical Movement and British Policy about Emigration

An appraisal of proselytisation and allied matters is instructive in getting to know the British mind about India in the two decades beginning 1793. In spite of the prevailing ban on the entry of clergymen to India, Carey and Thomas arrived in Calcutta that year secretly, and Marshman and Ward in Serampore six years after. After short stay at different places, all these men with families came to settle in Serampore (it was a Danish settlement) with the approval of the Baptist Mission Society of London. As the ban on religious interference in British India was quite effective, no British vessel could be used by these clergymen. They had to wait for a vessel, flying a different flag, and the disembarkation had to be secret.

Grant, who had come to India earlier, found Bengal very deficient in educational facilities and the moral standard of the people low, mainly as a result of poverty. He felt strongly that to improve the youth of Bengal educationally and morally they should be given an opportunity to study the ethical principles of the Bible, choice should be open to them to accept Christianity. He tried to persuade the Government to permit and help missionary schemes, but he failed upto 1786. In 1790, he returned to England and tried to gain the same objective with the help of Wilberforce and other liberals. But the President of the Board of Control opposed missionary work in Bengal in keeping with the assurances already given to the people of India. It was felt that both conversion and secular training would be interpreted by Indians as interference with their religion and this might give rise to agitation against the British.

This ban on conversion was however strongly disliked by a group of British intellectuals and liberal-minded politicians and administrators who held the view that an opportunity should not be denied to Indians to accept Christianity if they desired and also to receive a secular education, for which schoolmasters should be allowed to emigrate to India. It is not that Grant and others were not aware of the opinion of a section of the British, particularly of Henry Prinsep, who, having lived in India for pretty long, became a real friend of Indians and held the view that "to expect to make converts of the natives of India was an idle, absurd and unpracticable object."

In addition to Wilberforce, there were other important members of Parliament like Pitt, Fox, Burke, Sheridan and Wyndham who belonged to the Clapham group and studied the conditions in India and the needs of India. Yet in all their honest endeavours there was hardly any reference to imparting education or raising the common people in the scale of civilisation. Among these was the outstanding personality of Grant, who devoted his best attention to advance educational facilities in the hope that by this alone, moral and religious improvement would be achieved.

Grant, who was in full sympathy with India's educational and moral progress, "... adopted the opinion subsequently enunciated by Sir Charles Metcalfe that divine providence has assuredly some higher and nobler objects in bestowing the interests of India on England than to facilitate the export or import of cotton piecegoods . . ."

An adverse opinion (i.e. against educational facilities for the Indians) was strongly held by another group and John Marshman expressed it thus :

"The proposal to enlighten the natives of India was reprobated by an overwhelming majority, simply because it was supposed to be incompatible with the maintenance of their own power and privileges. The natives of India were to be kept in a state of perpetual ignorance and to be denied the means of mental advancement that England

might be enabled to hold the country without trouble and monopolise its trade and draw its resources.”

Parliament, however, ignored these views for its own reasons. It could not accept what Grant and Wilberforce wanted because of possible agitation in India. It therefore continued the ban on emigration, thus throwing overboard whatever Grant could surreptitiously suggest in the clause inserted in the Company's Charter of 1793. It has been rightly remarked :

“Thus fell to the ground the grand scheme of the mission of Bengal which originated in the zeal and benevolence of Grant. The support of the Government was considered indispensable to its success, and that support was peremptorily refused. It was not under the auspices of bishops, archbishops, ministers of state that the Gospel was to be introduced among the natives of Bengal but through the humble yet energetic efforts of an obscure denomination. It was while these abortive attempts were made to enlist the support of the great in the cause of the mission and to establish it by might and by power that the small and unpretending association was formed among the Baptists at Kettering and Carey was preparing to embark for Calcutta in the face of every discouragement.”

It has been stated already that from 1793 restrictions on missionaries continued so far as the British-occupied territories were concerned. The liberal group in Parliament opposing the continuance of restrictions could not enlist the support of the majority, and the reason was not far to seek. This was the sepoy mutiny at Vellore in 1806 on an apparently small issue relating to religious practice among the sepoys. This revolt was a setback to the liberal group because it was a clear warning to abstain from interference with India's religious affairs. In 1807, Lord Minto, the Governor-General, adopted a very cautious attitude in this matter, as did Dundas, President of the Board of Control and a very close friend of Minto.

As the time approached for renewing the Charter in 1813, liberal views began to assert themselves again, and more

strongly. The pressure on Parliament through representations from various missions reached such a level and public support became so pronounced that Parliament at last lifted the ban. From now missionaries and teachers were allowed entry into India.

Note 7 : Secular Training

Regarding secular training, as Charles Grant and Wilberforce contemplated, in spite of the ban upto 1813 on entry into India of both missionaries and school-masters, some kind of informal training used to be imparted by the missionaries who came to Bengal and other places some time in the middle of the 18th century. About a decade before 1813, when the Bengali version of the Bible was published by Carey, the people began to read Bengali as it appeared in the translations. If the missionary school-masters had been allowed earlier, subjects like arithmetic, history, geography, etc., would have been taught earlier and better.

Whatever work was done by the Baptists, it attracted the admiration of the East India Company's officials. By this time, Carey, in charge of the Bengali section of the Fort William College, engaged some important men to write books on stories, fables, history and other subjects. In the college, quite a good work was being done in Bengali, Sanskrit, Hindustani, Persian, Arabic, etc., and also in subjects like law, history, mathematics, political economy, European classics and administrative topics. Very early steps were taken by Carey to appoint a well-known Bengali scholar Mrityunjoy Vidyalkar to write books in Bengali and he himself was engaged in writing a Bengali grammar.

While the Serampore missionaries were using the early form of Bengali in translating the Bible and remodelling it for their own preaching purposes, the Fort William staff (Englishmen and the Bengalee staff) in charge of Bengali studies were trying to refine and refashion the language for writing books on history and literary pieces for imparting instruction to the civilians under training. Both Serampore

and Fort William units were quite separate organisations working for their own purposes. In the process, Bengali had ample opportunities for refinements and all-round progress. The greatest incentive to workers on Bengali language initially came from those two organisations. As a matter of fact, all the major Indian languages and studies in the classics together with ancient history, geography and mathematics, came to be revived. For the first time, a new spirit awoke in the upper layer of the society (though a very small section) in Bengal. For the first time, stress was laid on secular aspect of life through this training. This did not mean that education through Sanskrit in a high standard of traditional training was not continuing throughout the period. This traditional training was imparted more as a part of religious and intellectual life than for purely gainful occupations.

Syyed Ahmed (1817-98) and His efforts to win British favour

It needs hardly any mention that the Hindus took to English education in right earnest from the very beginning of contacts with the British whereas the Muslims showed considerable apathy and reluctance to take up English education and this attitude continued for three or four decades until Sir Syyed Ahmed of Aligarh started a movement to popularise English education among the Muslims. Earlier, it has been shown how eagerly the British Government wanted them to take up English education along with their own as early as 1806 when Lord Minto desired a few more centres on the existing ones. It will be remembered that in the very early years of the British rule in 1781, Warren Hastings established the Calcutta *Madrassah* but unfortunately the muslims did not demand more centres as was expected. Over a long period of 40-45 years the need was not felt for more centres—it was only as late as the 1820's that more *madrassahs* were established at Chittagong, Delhi, Hooghly and Sylhet, and this shows that the muslims were indifferent to education at this time. It would be correct to say that Syyed Ahmed of Aligarh was the pioneer of modern education in English for the Muslims of India. He imbibed liberal views on education from his maternal grandfather Khwaja Fariduddin,¹⁹ at one time

superintendent of the Calcutta *Madrassah*. Syyed's views were greatly strengthened by his stay in England, where he went in 1869 with his son Mahmud and was greatly impressed²⁰ by the British and their way of life.

On his return to India, Ahmed made strenuous efforts to foster English education among the Muslims. To start with, he founded the Mohammedan Educational Conference to initiate progressive measures for Muslim education and kept politics out of this association altogether. He was himself well-read in Arabic and Persian and held high government posts. He was a liberal in politics and unorthodox in social matters. When he took up the educational programme, he encountered formidable difficulties as the Muslims in general had a strong dislike for the British, whom they looked upon as conquerors only. Ahmed wanted to wean the Muslims away from this hostility to the British for the distinct purpose of assuring them of a larger share of employment opportunities in government which they were losing to Hindus with superior educational merits.

This policy enabled Ahmed to win favour with the British because the Hindus were showing at this time signs of organising themselves against foreign domination. The patriotism of Hindu India asserted itself with the occasional help of Muslims, Parsees and some Englishmen, to achieve self-government, through the Indian National Congress, established in 1885. Ahmed came to the fore by dissuading the Muslims from joining Congress and the result was that only two Muslims attended its opening session. This anti-Congress²¹ attitude did great harm to India's progress. The British naturally appreciated it and Ahmed's objective was achieved to a large extent.

Seeing the backwardness of Muslim education and judged from Muslim interests, Ahmed's lead was of immense value to the Muslims at the time, however much India, as a whole, suffered by their abstention from the demand for self-government. Ahmed should not, however, be mistaken for a communalist. His actions were not out of communal feeling but purely in the interest of bringing the Muslims into British favour and to

give them a larger share in the administration through English education. It is evident from the records that when the British took over in India, the Muslims predominated in the government machinery, but in the course of 40 years or so, the Hindus superseded them. At this point, Muslim separatism was taking shape and was accentuated by this clash of interests, while other factors developed later with increasing emphasis on religion on both sides. This antagonism to the British had political overtones, a natural growth in the minds of the conquered towards their conquerors.

Among the many contributory causes of the Sepoy Mutiny in 1857, one was anti-British feeling, though this feeling was a later outgrowth of the Wahhabi movement. Religious revivalism caused much unrest, and mixed with political dissatisfaction against the British, it continued (even after the mutiny had been ruthlessly crushed) but in a very minor key. It was at this time that Syyed Ahmed realised that the Muslim needed better counsel and direction when British power was so strongly entrenched in India. (For Wahhabism see p. 110)

The two Reformation movements compared

Let us now examine the inner core of the two movements: Rammohun's movement of reformation and the Muslim religious movement of Wahhabism. Rammohun pressed for discarding idolatrous practices and meaningless rituals and for accepting the unmistakable trends of the Hindu scriptures, specially monotheism. This alone would give the proper frame of mind for adopting the correct lines of moving forward and this would ensure movement towards progress of society as a whole. This would enable India to catch up with the West where activities in all directions had given a new life and vision to mankind. This was the aim of Rammohun's reformation. The Wahhabi movement, on the other hand, strove to revive pristine Islam, to make all Muslims obey Islamic law fully, strictly and to observe practices as they existed originally. This movement did not stress progressive change in Muslim society. On the contrary, the liberalism which came into the social life of the Muslims in certain

states elsewhere was a new trend against which a serious warning came through Wahhabism.

Soon after 1870, the Muslims were fully subdued by the British and became reconciled to their position in India. At that time, Syyed Ahmed of Aligarh was mature enough, being over 50 years, to realise the future of the Muslims, and he began to manoeuvre to acquire for them a position of equality with the Hindus.²¹ Finally, this, together with the efforts of Jinnah, ensured a separate Muslim India which ultimately took the name of Pakistan as a completely separate entity—thus the Muslims got full independence without any sacrifice.

Note 8 : Summary of events leading Muslims to anti-congress attitude

In 1899 came Lord Curzon, who was at first popular with the people of Bengal. But they were soon disillusioned by his ruthless administration, specially after Bengal was partitioned in 1905 when the anti-congress attitude of the Muslims was fully intensified (in the meantime Syyed Ahmed had died in 1898). This partition made East Bengal and Assam a Muslim-majority state. Politically conscious Bengal even then was a Hindu-majority state, linked with Bihar and Orissa. As a result of agitation, Bengal lost its Hindu-majority (was it not, at that time, a purely sentimental move without any political foresight?). With the creation of East Bengal, Bengal was reduced still further.

This anti-Congress attitude of Muslims began to create a feeling of separatism and it began to develop slowly on both sides. A special religious leaning began to be more and more prominent. After a time, ban on cow-slaughter became an important issue with the Hindus under Bal Gangadhar Tilak of Maharashtra, a remarkable but staunch Hindu leader who started this movement in different parts of the country through propagandists who went out distributing leaflets titled "The Cry of the Cow". Later Madan Mohan Malaviya and Munje, gave full support to the movement.

Muslim separatism further accentuated with its demand for separate electorate and its grant by Minto in 1906. Too much emphasis on religion on either side and too little emphasis on political consciousness of nationalism inevitably brought about a division between the two communities and later the two-nation theory of Iqbal (poet of Lahore) so long unacceptable to Jinnah, was at last accepted by him. The orthodox Hindu movement first under Swami Dayanand (1824-1883) the Arya Samaj leader, then under Hindu Mahasabha leaders, Madan Mohan Malaviya, and Munje, filled the atmosphere with tension against cow-slaughter, and alongside this the Muslim League with all its activities in reaction to the Hindu's political movements brought about a complete division between Hindus and Muslims. Wadud, therefore, rightly observed on Wahhabi movement :

“... But the success of the movement became noticeable not in any moral regeneration among them in spite of all their emphasis on better regulation of their religious observances, but in their political consciousness which resulted in the partition of India in 1947. The failure of the revivalist movements in religion to achieve the moral elevation of Man should provide the discerning with food for serious thoughts.”

Note 9 : Syyed Ahmed's Impressions of the British

In a letter written from England, Syyed Ahmed praised the British for their marked “politeness, knowledge, good faith, cleanliness, skilled workmanship and thoroughness,” which had apparently made a lasting impression on him. He added that all good things, spiritual and worldly, which should be found in a man had been bestowed by the Almighty on Europe, and especially on England.

Syyed Ahmed wrote in a letter :

Without flattering the English, I can truly say that the natives of India, high and low, merchant and petty shop-keeper, educated and illiterate, when contrasted with the

English in education, are as like them as a dirty animal is to an able and handsome man. What I have seen, and seen daily, is utterly beyond the imagination of a native of India. If any of my countrymen do not believe what I say, you may certainly put them down as frogs and fishes.

Jawaharlal Nehru later commented on Ahmed's writings on Britain :

“Greater praise no man could give to the British and to Europe, and it is obvious that he was tremendously impressed.”

But Ahmed's repeated use of irritating metaphors roused the resentment of his Indian readers and the journal of the scientific society which regularly featured the narrative of his travels had to suspend publication. Ahmed's biographer Abdul Hamid wrote in *Muslim Separatism in India* (1967) :

“To his own generation Syyed Ahmed Khan was primarily an educationist. It is remarkable that, being himself uneducated in English, he became the torch bearer of English education in Muslim India.”

Hamid also noted :

“... Sir Syyed went on to extol the British rule in India as the most wonderful phenomenon of all history, since its main business was to promote the wellbeing of a vast subject race by establishing peace ...”

Note 10 : Syyed Ahmed's Campaign Against Congress

Francis Robinson writes in *Separatism Among Muslims* :

“Syyed Ahmed opened his political campaign against the Congress in December 1887. His first assault came with a speech in the Kaiserbagh Baradari during the Muslim Educational Congress at Lucknow. By raising the spectre of Bengali superiority in any form of competition,

he attempted to rouse Hindus as well as Muslims of the Urdu-speaking elite. Now, I ask you, he said on the subject of competitive examinations, have Mohammedans attained to such a position as regards higher English education, which is necessary for higher appointments, as to put them on a level with Hindus or not? Most certainly not. Now, I take Mohammedans and the Hindus of our province together, and ask whether they are able to compete with the Bengalis or not. Most certainly not. When this is the case, how can competitive examination be introduced into our country? (Cheers). Think for a moment what would be the result if all appointments were given by competitive examination. Over all races, not only over Mohammedans but over rajas of high position and the brave Rajputs who have not forgotten the swords of their ancestors, would be placed as ruler a Bengali who at sight of a table knife would crawl under his chair (uproarious cheers and laughter). In the normal case, he continued on the subject of election to the Imperial Legislative Council, no single Mohammedan will secure a seat in the Viceroy's Council. The whole Council will consist of Babu so-and-so Mitter, Babu so-and-so Ghose, and Babu so-and-so Chuckerbutty (laughter). Again, what will be the result for the Hindus of our province, though their condition be better than that of the Mohammedans? What will be the result for those Rajputs the swords of whose ancestors are still wet with blood? Everybody knows well that the agitation of the Bengalis is not the agitation of the whole of India . . .” In reply to criticism of his speech, he asked, “Can any Bengali honestly say that the schemes which they have advocated in the Congress, would benefit anybody except themselves, and next to them the Marathas and Brahmans? The Congress”, he concluded, “is in reality a civil war without arms. The object of civil war is to determine in whose hands the rule of the country shall rest. The object of the promoters of the National Congress is that the Government of India should be English in name only, and that the internal rule of the country should be entirely in their own hands.”

NOTES

1. Portuguese came to India first in Cochin in 1497 and then in Goa (1510), arrived Bengal in 1537. They established two Centres—at Bandel (Hooghly) where a famous church was built by them and at Chittagong. They were very enterprising and brought into India (Goa) Printing Machine as early as 1556.

Printing was introduced into Bengal by the English in 1780 and the first press was the Baptist Mission Press in 1800. They wanted to be mainly busy in conversion work. They were so earnest about it that they brought all resources to print Bible in Bengali with the help of Roman Script (Bengali types were constructed later).

2. Danes occupied Serampore in 1616; they left Serampore in 1845 when the British purchased it.
3. Dutch took Java in exchange of Chinsurah from the British.
4. French continued in Chandernagar till very recent times.
5. Maratha robbers (*Bargis*) were a great menace.
6. Adam Smith indicates the following reasons: "The drought in Bengal, a few years ago, might probably have occasioned a great dearth. Some improper regulations, some injudicious restraints enforced by the servants of the East India Company upon the rich traders contributed to turn the dearth into a famine." (*The Wealth of Nations*, Modern Library Edition, p. 493)
7. Sir W.W. Hunter estimated the death figure at ten million.
8. In founding the Madrassah, Hastings had one eye on cultural development, the other on qualifying "the sons of Muhammadan gentlemen for responsible and lucrative offices in the State, even at that date largely monopolised by the Hindus." The cost was at first privately defrayed by the Governor-General and after two years reimbursed. (*Historical Records*, p. 7)
9. Colonial Culture: It is a fact that India had its renaissance coming in contact with the British and hence it is described by some critics as colonial culture by way of disparagement, in an air of exhibiting superior sense of history and also by ridiculing the present Indian culture as a mixture. It should be kept in mind that this mixture will, in course of time, be some kind of a fusion of the two Cultures, as Roman civilization stood after its contact with Greek civilisa-

tion. This is the inevitable historical process of fusion. There is nothing to sneer at it and the critics should understand that this is the only process of synthesis. It should be noted that Indians have adopted more from the British than from their earlier rulers, the Muslims.

10. See Explanatory Note 1 (*Some earliest British Researchers*, p. 52)

11.	Name	Special contribution in
	Harington	— Buddhism,
	Mackenzie	— History and study of inscriptions, History of South India,
	Strachey	— History of Algebra, Algebra of ancient Hindus,
	Malcolm	— History of India (specially of the Sikhs), History of West India,
	Davis	— Algebra, Trigonometry and Astronomical calculations of ancient Hindus,
	Wilford	— Ancient Geography of India,
	Gilchrist	— Indological studies, study of Hindusthanee,
	Hunter	— Indological studies and library science,
	Wilson	— Sanskrit, Hindu law etc.,
	Roebuck	— Library science,
	Leyden	— Indological studies
12.	1656	— Dara Shekoh had translation of the <i>Upanishads</i> made from Sanskrit into Persian.
	1801	— Duperron's translations into Latin from Persian and Sanskrit with dissertations.
	1816	— Rammohun's translation of <i>Kena</i> according to the gloss of Sankara.
	1879	— Max Muller's translation of the <i>Upanishads</i> .
	1878	— Deussen's translation of the <i>Upanishads</i> .

12A. *Wilson, H.H. (1786-1860)*—He came to India in 1808 as a surgeon for the East India Company. He was Deputy Assay Master in 1816. He acquired mastery of Sanskrit. He left India in 1832 when he was appointed the first Boden Professor of Sanskrit at Oxford defeating Max Muller. He became Director of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain after Colebrooke's death. He was a contemporary of Rammohun around the second decade. He was so much influenced by Hinduism that he even opposed abolition of Suttee. In some matters he was against Rammohun, but recognised him as the only scholar with whom he could discuss sastric and other academic matters. Wilson's great work was a Sanskrit-English Dictionary.

13. Explanatory Note 2 on Carey, p. 54.
14. Carey supplements Halhed's Grammar as follows "I have made some distinctions and observations not noticed by Halhed particularly on the declension of nouns and verbs and the use of participles."
- 14A. Explanatory Note 4 on Prinsep, p. 58.
- 14B. Explanatory Note 3 on Charles Grant, pp. 56-58.
15. Bentinck's move does not appear to be consistent with his progressive role in Indian affairs but on a more thorough enquiry, it will be found that education at the college had become very expensive (about £ 660 per student per year) and, further, the new generation of civilian students was less open to oriental culture. Holt Mackenzie and Bentinck wanted the Indianisation of the service in 1825. Bentinck was a believer in a strong, semi-military government with a bias against European privilege, which he seemed to embody then.
16. It is said that when Carey was only 15 years old, he knew very well Hebrew, Latin and Greek languages.
17. What happened was that when Lord Hastings was annexing territories, some portions of Rajputana States came into the hands of the British. Since recruits to the army came substantially from the Rajputs, Hindi gained much importance in the Fort William College and it claimed special emphasis in the college. The departmental head (Thomas Roebuck) tried to prove before the college authorities that Bengali was then far less important than Hindustani and support to Bengali should be withdrawn in favour of the latter. At this time, Carey placed on the table the conflicting claims of Indian Muslims, Urdu, Hindustani, Bengali and other interests. Here again Carey played his constructive role of giving prominence to Bengali language since the elite of Bengal Presidency came from the Bengali community—not from Urdu-speaking section—far less from the Hindi speaking section.
18. In which Cornwallis, Wellesley and Lord Moira (later Hastings) were very largely involved (See Embree *Charles Grant and British Rule in India*, p. 276).
 - Explanatory Note 4 on Conversion into Christianity, p. 58.
 - Explanatory Note 5 on Wilberforce, p. 58
 - Explanatory Note 6 on Evangelical Movement, p. 59.
 - Explanatory Note 7 on Secular Training, p. 62.
19. Ḳhwaja Fariduddin later held the post of *Mokhtar* of the Mughal

Emperor, Akbar II. It is believed that he mentioned Rammohun's name to the Emperor for Ambassador's work in England.

- 20. Explanatory Note 9 on Syyed Ahmad's impressions of the British, p. 67.**
- 21. Explanatory Note 8 on Summary of Events leading the Muslims to anti-Congress attitude, p. 66.**

Vedantic Studies in Bengal from Early Times

It should be noted that in the 17th and 18th centuries, the study of *Vedanta* in pursuit of true knowledge respecting the supreme spirit, Brohmo, was meagre in Bengal. Brahmin *pundits* with high academic interest engaged themselves in *Smriti*, *Alankar*, *Sahitya*, *Kavya*, *Vyakaran*, etc. Apparently the reason was that *Vedanta* offered a much stiffer course of study, though *Sankhya* would have no less. The study of *Nyaya* being the basic study for both *Vedanta* and *Sankhya*, once *Nyaya* philosophy comes under control, both *Sankhya* and *Vedanta* should present no special toughness, and all scriptural texts including *Gita* would easily come under one's close grasp. It is in this way that one can be well acquainted with Indian philosophy, religion and highest thought. It has to be observed that during these times the other places of India did not contribute any more to enriching Vedantic studies except Kashi (Benares) in Northern India and Kanchi (Kanchipuram) in Thanjavur. There were, however, very old Hindu centres of learning at Ujjain (Central India), Sringeri (Mysore), Nadia (Bengal), and Mithila (now in Bihar) while Taxila, Nalanda, Pataliputra were Buddhist centres.

It appears that even in the two preceding centuries, from the time of Madhusudan Saraswati (16th century), one of the foremost Vedantists of India, this was the condition of Bengal

except for one or two eminent scholars. It is, however, noteworthy that from the 11th to 15th centuries, Vedantic studies did thrive in Bengal with such illustrious scholars as Aniruddha (Ballal Sen's *Guru* in the 11th century); Krishnamisra (11th century) of Bhursut,¹ who wrote *Probodh-Chandroday*, *Halayudha*; Lakshman Sen's religious minister towards the end of the 12th century who is reputed to have made detailed comments on three hundred Ayurvedic mantras; Gunavishnu Bhatta in the 12th century, who was a Court-philosopher of Maharaja Ballalsen and Lakshmansen and wrote a commentary on the *Chandogya mantras of Sam-veda* and received approbation from Sayana himself; Bhabadev Bhatta, who in the 12th century wrote a commentary on Kumaril's² (8th century) *Mimansa-Darshan*, and also Balkrishna Bhattacharya who wrote *Adhikaran Kaumudi*, a commentary on the Vedas, in the 15th century. Later, there were Raghunandan (16th century), Kali Shiromani, Chandrakanta Tarkalankar, who wrote *Mimansharatna*, *Vignanabhiksu*, Madhusudan Saraswati (16th century), one of the profoundest of a handful of Sankara's followers in Vedantic studies who wrote *Advaita-siddhi*, *Gitatika*, *Gita-nibanda*, *Vedanta-kalpatika*, *Siddhantabindu*, *Prasthanaveda*, *Sankhepa-sariraka-tika*, *Bhagabat-tika*, *Rasapanchadhyay*, *Sandilya-sutra* and some other works. There were also Advaita-Vedantists, like Sriharsha, Vasudev Sarbabhaum³ and Lakshmidhar who wrote *Advaita-siddhanta*, a commentary on Madhusudan's *Advaita-siddhi* and *Siddhantabindu*. Sridhar who lived in Bhursut, was a great scholar in *Vedanta* as well as *Nyaya* on which he wrote *Nyaya Kandali*.

The foregoing records of Halayudha,⁴ Gunavishnu, Lakshmidhar, Vasudev, Krishnamisra Sridhar, Bhabadev Bhatta, Ramkrishna Bhattacharya, Raghunandana, Kalishiromoni, Chandrakanta, Raghunath Bhattacharyya, Baladev Vidyabhushan Madhusudan Saraswati show that in earlier periods, *Vedanta* used to attract serious thinkers of Bengal though other subjects like *Nyaya*, *Kavya*, *Vyakarana*, etc., were more popular. Probably *Sankhya* received much greater attention than *Vedanta*. It is, however, difficult to say to what extent Bengalee scholars studied *Vedanta* in Bengal and to what extent in Kashi (Benares). Be that as it may, what

strikes us is that in spite of the prevalence of Vedic studies among scholars of Bengal, there has been and still is a strong feeling all over India that scholars of Bengal are averse to Vedic studies. Such a prejudice needs some explanation and should not be brushed aside lightly. One reason is that indirect support of this view may be that in Bengal, there was a strong current of Tantric influence for a long time, together with large Buddhistic rituals, specially of the Bajrajan type.

When and how these endless accumulations of rituals entered the Hindu religious practices and how they became a substantial addition to the existing Tantric rituals, will defy explanations. We can only express utter surprise at this and say that it is an irony of fate, for Buddhism very essentially opposed rituals and was based on rationalism, and on ethical code of conduct. Buddha gave a severe blow to Hindu idol-worship but soon after his death, the same idolatry reappeared in a hideous form. No wonder one section of our people holds the view that later Buddhism was to a great extent responsible for the large measure of idolatry in Hindu society. It cannot be denied that over the centuries past, Bengal was submerged under Tantric and Buddhist rituals and hence pure Vedantic studies suffered. But what Bengal lost over a time came as a gain in another form. The rigours of Vedic injunctions softened, and this accounts for the liberalism which marks Bengal even today. The caste system and the orthodox practices to a large extent associated with Vedic injunctions, still maintain their rigour all over India except in Bengal and in the regions influenced by Jainism. The liberalism in Bengal's religious thoughts and practices can thus be traced to Tantra to some extent, and this partially explains Rammohun's acceptance of Tantra in various important matters. Thus while his basic stand was on *Vedanta*, he accepted Tantric practices and Saiva practices when he felt that the progress in the society demanded them. For Rammohun this was a boon, for it made him unique. Against such a background emerged Rammohun's towering personality, combining tradition with progress, convention with catholicity, scholarship with humanism, rigour with sympathy, and caution with modernity.

NOTES

1. Bhursut (Bhursoot) village was near Radhanagar (Rammohun's birth place)
2. Kumaril, a South Indian, was reputed as a great scholar of Vedanta and Mimansa and later became a Buddhist. His disciple Mandan-misra was defeated in a public polemical contest by Sankara on the particular issue of Vedanta's Advaitism.
3. A commentary on Lakshmidhar's *Advaita Makaranda* was written by Vasudev Sarbabhaum in 1550.
4. It cannot be stated with certainty whether he belongs to Bengal or Bihar etc.

Date of Birth of Rammohun Roy

VARIOUS dates¹ have been mentioned in different writings as the year of Rammohun's birth, among them May 22, 1772, 1774, 1776, 1780 and 1784—the year is under controversy but the day May 22 is accepted by all. Some of these writings have mentioned the year without taking any care, and they need not be taken into account; only two 1772 and 1774, have been found to be seriously held with sufficient evidence. Our object is to find out which of these two is more likely, but no amount of arguments can establish any date beyond question. We may start with the remarks on this point of Rammohun's most intimate and helpful friend John Digby :

“Rammohun Roy . . . is by birth a Brahmin of very respectable origin, in the province of Bengal, about 43 years of age. His acquirements are considerable : to a thorough knowledge of Sanskrit (the language of the Brahmanical scriptures) he has added Persian and Arabic; and possessing an acute understanding, he early conceived a contempt for the religious prejudices and absurd superstitions of his caste. At the age of 22, (really 24 in 1796) he commenced the study of the English language, which not pursuing with application, he, five years afterwards, when I became acquainted with him, could merely speak it well enough to be understood upon the most common

topics of discourse, but could not write it with any degree of correctness."

From this, one may see that even Digby, so intimate with Rammohun, started by mentioning his age as 43 (in 1817) but later contradicted himself in the same note, proving thereby that he was not certain² about the date of birth. Rammohun's age, as recorded in the government office register, should have been available, but it was not.

Summing up, the points *in favour of 1772* are:

1. John Digby's statement, (as above)
2. Lalitmohan Chatterjee's (great grandson of Rammohun) confirmation,
3. Ramaprasad Roy's (son of Rammohun) confirmation,
4. Dall, an American Brahmo, heard Ramaprasad say that his father was born in 1772,
5. Historian Hunter came to the conclusion that 1772 should be the year of birth,
6. Maharshi Debendranath accepted 1772 as the year of birth.

and the points *in favour of 1774* are :

1. The tablet fixed (through the efforts of Dwarkanath Tagore and Rammohun's Bristol friends) on the tomb at Bristol after Rammohun's death bore this. In such a public matter, Dwarkanath must have taken sufficient care to ascertain the correct date of birth before fixing the tablet.
2. Rev. Lant Carpenter held that the year of birth of Rammohun was 1774,—evidently he heard it from Rammohun himself.

3. Alexander Duff's statement in 1830 put Rammohun's date of birth in 1774.
4. Kissori Chand Mitra wrote in 1845 in favour of 1774 as the year of birth of Rammohun.

In our opinion, the line of approach adopted so far for coming to a conclusion about the year of Rammohun's birth has not been satisfactory. In the absence of his parents' written records or any clear evidence leading to the date of birth, it is futile to take other individuals' statements or impressions. For deciding which of the two years 1772 and 1774 would give the more correct picture, it is far more satisfactory to depend upon the dates of important events of his life and chronologically arrange them with as much accuracy as it would be possible.

Let us start investigations that way by accepting the birth-date as May 22, 1774 and see how they fit in with the various important events of his life. This tablet, on the tomb at Arno's Vale cemetery in Bristol, records the date May 22, 1774 and it was laid in 1842 on the authority of a previous tablet (at Stapleton Grove) in the preparation of which Prince Dwarkanath Tagore (father of Maharshi Debendranath Tagore) is said to have played a prominent part. Dwarkanath (1794-1846) was an intimate friend of Rammohun though much younger. In those days, Dwarkanath attained great eminence in India as he lived like a Prince in the midst of luxury as much here as in England. He was very important in the social life of Bengal and had also made a name in the English circles and was known as an Indian business-prince. Such a man must have taken sufficient care to ascertain the exact year of Rammohun's birth and engrave it on the tablet. Yet this tablet-date was not adopted at the end by the Committee appointed for final decision.

There is an important section of people, no doubt, which puts Rammohun's birth in 1772 on the grounds stated earlier. As both sides held strong convictions on the point, the Government of India appointed a committee to study the

question and give a final decision. This committee decided in favour of 1772 taking all points into account and giving due importance to the opinions of Rammohun's very near relations—his son Ramaprasad and his grandson Lalit-mohan Chatterjee (Rammohun's eldest son's daughter—Chandrajyoti's son). This committee must have also given due importance to Prince Dwarkanath Tagore's views as the latter was closely associated with Rammohun in crucial points of his life and knew him personally very well. The arguments in support of both dates are so evenly balanced that in spite of the committee's decision, we feel the matter is controversial and remains open until a more satisfactory explanation can be offered in favour of the year 1774.

In these circumstances, we would like to start our investigations taking 1774 as the year of birth and then see how far other important events fit in with the bio-data of Rammohun Roy. We will presently see that this stand of ours is largely justified on the basis of assumptions appropriate to Rammohun and well-suited to reconcile the important events of his life which are given below :

- (a) The composition of a stray article when Rammohun was 15 or 16 years of age (i.e. 1790) which created a misunderstanding and Rammohun left home,
- (b) his absence from home for four years (1790-1794), it is surmised, led him to Patna, Benaras and Tibet,
- (c) his return home when he was 20 years of age (1794),
- (d) stay on his father's estate for about four years (1795-1798) in the capacity of estate manager and thus continuing the work there almost upto early 1799 (see his letters dated 21.2.98 and 28.2.99 on page 18 of *Rammohun Roy*, a book in Bengali by the eminent researcher Brojendranath Bandopadhyay, published by Bangiya Sahitya Parishad, Calcutta).

At this time the division of his father's immovable

property took place on December 1, 1796 by which he got his due share including a house at Calcutta.

- (e) his departure from the estate in the face of impending complications in respect of the properties in the control of his father and elder brother (suits filed against them by Burdwan Raj and Government) and his arrival at Benares to study the Hindu *Sastras*, advanced Sanskrit, English, etc. (1799-1803),
- (f) his association with Woodford and John Digby in 1803 in Calcutta after study at Kashi (Benaras) for over three years,
- (g) his service under Woodford at Murshidabad in 1803 and a few months later, his visit to Burdwan to be present at his father's death-bed in the middle of 1803.

It will be observed that the above placing of events based on Rammohun's life-sketch³ and other records is accepted by historians and in a way authenticated. On Rammohun's return home from his long absence for about four years, his father must have taken the opportunity to get him fully occupied (from 1795) with various duties on his estate. The researcher Brojen Banerjee has evidence that Rammohun was working in the estate in 1796 implying thereby that he was employed there at that time. There is not much difference between Banerjee's position and ours but there is still a time-gap of about a year which remains to be accounted for. In support of 1795 against 1796, two points seem very important: first, Rammohun's return home (probably by recall) in 1794-95, could not have been regarded by his father with any indifference because that would be detrimental to the larger interests of the family. It is obvious that 1794-95 was a crucial time for the family, because if he was not fixed up in a responsible position in the estate, there was a strong fear that he would be lost for ever to the family. We, therefore, believe that immediately on his return, he was put on

the estate as manager on some emoluments which, by the way, helped him to build up a cash reserve and that helped him in his money lending business. This being accepted, our chronology seems to be well-grounded on events till 1798. We may further accept as reasonable that in 1799 he was in the family estate off and on, but determined to leave it for ever (not only because he saw that he had many duties to do in a wider field but also because Rammohun did not fail to see the dark side in the family, viz., pettiness and trickery of his father and elder brother) which were all directed towards holding fast to the estate taken on Izara without payment of dues. All these at last made him leave the estate and go to Benares and devote his life to extensive studies of scriptures which was to keep him engaged in the work on India's past contributions. He must have known that the Fort William College men were already at this work. Here two very important points emerge :

(a) This period 1799-1803 covering Rammohun's continuous stay at Benares, becomes a very important landmark. If therefore Rammohun's birth year be taken to be 1772 (instead of 1774), these extra two years must be without any work for Rammohun or have to be added to his work in the estate which then become $6\frac{1}{2}$ years. Both these are absurd. We do not think that Rammohun after his long travels and study experiences and a vision of a more progressive and enlightened social life, could have stuck to unproductive village life any longer than $4\frac{1}{2}$ years; to be candid, even $4\frac{1}{2}$ years would be a difficult job, but once he was reconciled to his father's wishes, whether he liked it or not, he put his best efforts to the work in the estate for $4\frac{1}{2}$ years. His father was pleased, otherwise, the division of family property might have been disastrous for him. In the context of such a situation, Rammohun's leaving for Benares some time in the earlier or middle part of 1799 was very reasonable and highly probable.

(b) No serious student of Rammohun's life can dispute the fact that he must have spent about $3/4$ years in continuous⁴ intensive study at Benares after a preliminary study-period

at Kashi which gave him the necessary incentive to dive deeper into Hindu scriptures. It is doubtless that at least five or six years would be necessary to be thorough and conversant with the Hindu sacred books—to fully comprehend Sankara's gloss and to formulate his own interpretations—to be able to conduct disputations in Sanskrit. These religious discussions were not possible if a thorough study was not made with the help of scholars in Sanskrit and philosophy at Kashi where best men from north, south, east and west used to meet. Unless Rammohun sat at the feet of consummate scholars of India, it would not have been possible for him to proclaim Advaitism with the highest confidence. This study would require at least five or six years in constant reflection. To provide for this, in the case of Rammohun, is to shorten the period of stay for estate-management. This tends to indicate his birth in the later year, i.e., 1774.

These two points being granted, the matter becomes easy to see that the bio-data fits in much better with events that were beyond dispute. We feel well-fortified by these facts to take 1774 as the year of Rammohun's birth.

Explanatory Note

Autobiographical Sketch of Rammohun

My dear Friend,

In conformity with the wish, you have frequently expressed, that I should give an outline of my life, I have now the pleasure to give you the following very brief sketch.

My ancestors were Brahmins of a high order, and, from time immemorial, were devoted to the religious duties of their race down to my fifth progenitor, who about 140 years ago gave up spiritual exercises for worldly pursuits and aggrandisement. His descendants ever since followed his example, and according to the usual fate of courtiers, with various success, sometimes rising to honour and sometimes failing; sometimes rich and sometimes poor; sometimes excelling in success, sometimes miserable through disappointment. But my maternal ancestors, being of the sacerdotal order by profession as

well as by birth and a family than which none holds higher rank in that profession, have upto the present day uniformly adhered to a life of religious observances and devotion, preferring peace and tranquility of mind to the excitements of ambition, and all the allurements of wordly grandeur.

In conformity with the usage of my paternal race, and the wish of my father, I studied the Persian and Arabic languages, these being indispensable to those who attached themselves to the courts of the Mohammedan princes; and agreeably to the usage of my maternal relations, I devoted myself to the study of the Sanskrit and the theological works written in it, which contain the body of Hindu literature, law and religion.

When about the age of sixteen, I composed a manuscript calling in question the validity of the idolatrous system of the Hindoos. This, together with my known sentiments on that subject, having produced a coolness between me and my immediate kindred, I proceeded on my travels, and passed through different countries chiefly within, but some beyond, the bounds of Hindoostan, with a feeling of great aversion to the establishment of the British power in India. When I had reached the age of twenty, my father recalled me and restored me to his favour; after which I first saw and began to associate with Europeans, and soon after made myself tolerably acquainted with their laws and form of government. Finding them generally more intelligent, more steady and moderate in their conduct, I gave up my prejudice against them, and became inclined in their favour, feeling persuaded that their rule, though a foreign yoke, would lead more speedily and surely to the amelioration of the native inhabitants; and I enjoyed the confidence of several of them even in their public capacity. My continued controversies with the Brahmins on the subject of their idolatry and superstition, and my interference with their custom of burning widows, and other pernicious practices, revived and increased the animosity against me; and through their influence with my family, my father was again obliged to withdraw his countenance openly, though his limited pecuniary support was still continued to me.

After my father's death, I opposed the advocates of idolatry with still greater boldness. Availing myself of the art of printing, now established in India, I published various works and pamphlets against their errors, in the native and foreign languages. This raised such a feeling against me, that I was at last deserted by every person except two or three Scotch friends, to whom, and the nation to which they belong, I always feel grateful. The ground which I took in all my controversies was, not that of opposition to Brahminism, but to a perversion of it; and I endeavoured to show the idolatry of Brahminism, was contrary to the practice of their ancestors, and the principles of the ancient books and authorities which they profess to revere and obey. Notwithstanding the violence of the opposition and resistance to my opinions, several highly respectable persons, both among my relations and others, began to adopt the same sentiments. I now felt a strong wish to visit Europe, and obtain, by personal observation, a more thorough insight into its manners, customs, religion, and political institutions. I refrained, however, from carrying this intention into effect untill the friends who coincided in my sentiments should be increased in number and strength. My expectations having been at length realised, in November 1830, I embarked for England, as the discussion of the East India Company's charter was expected to come in by which the treatment of the natives of India, and its future government, would be determined for many years to come, and an appeal to the King in council, against the abolition of the practice of burning widows, was to be heard before the Privy Council; and His Majesty the Emperor of Delhi had likewise commissioned me to bring before the authorities in England certain encroachments on his rights by the East India Company. I accordingly arrived in England in April, 1831.

I hope you will excuse the brevity of this sketch, and I have no leisure at present to enter into particulars, and I remain, & c,

Rammohun Roy.

NOTES

1. Kali O Kalam, 6th year, 9th issue.
2. The same Digby, in his letter written in 1817 from England immediately after the publication of *Kenopanishad and Abridgement of the Vedanta in England* wrote :
 “Rammohun is about forty-three years of age...” showing his year of birth to be 1774 and in the same letter he mentions about the age of 22 (really 24 in 1796).
3. See Explanatory Note (Autobiographical sketch) on page 84.
Miss Collet doubted the genuineness of the sketch but Max Muller could not fully accept Miss Collet's views about the sketch. The present author takes it as genuine as the English composition appears to be Rammohun's own. By doubting without reason, we remain in greater darkness.
4. Except one very short break in 1801, when he met Digby for the first time at Calcutta for a very short time. It is curious that Digby who could not have known Rammohun in 1801 should refer in his letter (p. 78) to matters of 1796.

Rammohun's Early Life and Travels (1774-1794)

RAMMOHUN was born in a Vaishnava family and his mother Tarini Devi was the daughter of Shyam Bhattacharjee who belonged to a well-known Sakta family. Rammohun showed from his childhood a combination of courage and vigour with politeness and conviction. When he was very young, he scrupulously adhered to the traditions of a Brahmin family and hence his first duty was to read the Gita in the morning. His schooling was through Persian as this was the court language and also Sanskrit. In course of time, when his reputation was high, a legend grew about him that he had travelled to Patna and other places after running away from home at the age of eight, some held it to be at the age of ten and still others believed it to be at the age of twelve. One should immediately realise the difficulties of travel in those days to distant places like Patna, Kashi (Benares), etc. It was an unthinkable venture at such a tender age, the land journey being very dangerous and the river journey too very arduous, expensive and risky involving three hundred and fifty miles of sailing upstream on the river Ganga.

Besides, one must not forget that going out for higher education¹ was hardly thought of those days. The tradition of the family was service, and his father did not put his eldest son Jugmohun to higher studies but employed him in his

Zamindari. It is highly improbable that any exception should have been thought of in the case of Rammohun; this could have been possible if the parents found extraordinary signs or studious habits in him. Of course they found indications of precocity and a kind of growing distaste for the usual Brahmin practices at home. These were expected to go against the idea of any special education for him. For education of those times it was enough that Rammohun joined the local school upto the time he was 13/14 years old. That was when he came in contact with Nandakumar Vidyalkar of the neighbouring village Palpara (place of stay of his brother Ramchandra Vidyavagis who became famous later on in the Brahmo Samaj). Round about the time Rammohun met Nandakumar, his dislike of idol-worship became apparent and as time passed, it turned into a positive aversion. He was, however, truly religious by nature and adopted strict discipline and restraint in his habits and mode of living. His close association with Nandakumar (later known as Hariharananda Tirthaswamy Kulabadhut) must have led him to deeper thinking on the essentials of Hinduism and to the study of Hindu scriptures including *Vedanta*, *Tantras*, etc. Rammohun was in his sixteenth year when he wrote a paper severely criticising idolatry and this came to the notice of his father, who it is said, greatly disliked such mental bent. This created bitterness with the parents and Rammohun left home (evidently in protest). There is no record of his wanderings but knowing his mental state, there is strong reason to surmise that he went to Patna and stayed with his relations belonging to another branch of the family. It is further surmised that after some time he went to Benares. At both these places he studied and in all likelihood *Tuhfat* was written soon after completion of his studies at Patna. Since Rammohun was brought back home from Benares through the help of Hariharananda, it is further assumed that these two years must have been spent in intensive study of Hindu theology, *Tantra* and other allied matters. His stay at the above two places must have covered at least four years in which case, the probability of his travel to Tibet must be negligible.

On the basis of the letter to Gordon, Rammohun's 16th

and 20th years were landmarks. It seems to us therefore that in the context of the conflict between father and son in his 16th year, it would not be wrong to conclude that when he left home, his aim was to seek confirmation of his religious views expressed in the manuscript which upset his parents. Hence it is reasonable to infer that he went to Patna for an intensive study of Islamic theology and to Benares for Hindu theology so that his ideas could be corroborated or rejected. There is, however, no authentic record of his going to either place, but his visit to these places for higher study has come down to us from biographer to biographer and we can take it as a part of dependable history. The main reason, however, for accepting that he went to these places is to explain how Rammohun acquired proficiency in Islamic and Hindu theology together with a good study of Hindu *Smriti* and *Sruti*. Hence his stay at Patna and Benares for the greater part of four years should be easily accepted without question. For the knowledge and grasp over various subjects relating to Hinduism, it is absolutely essential that he should devote three to four years continuously in Benares under well-known pundits. If Rammohun spent the time in study in these two places (at least two years in each place) he would have no time to undertake the hard journey to Tibet unless for a very short period since he returned home in 1794-95. We therefore, reject the possibility of Rammohun's travel to Tibet.

Yet we dare not categorically reject the possibility, in view of the following lines of Rammohun in *Tuhfat-ul-Muwahhidin* however vague the description of his travel may be :

“I travelled in the remotest parts of the world, in plains as well as in hilly lands, and I found the inhabitants thereof agreeing generally in believing in the existence of One Being, Who is the source of creation and governor of it. . . .”

Just now we have rejected a long journey and study within

a short period. Since Rammohun says "... remotest parts of the world. . ." and Carpenter gave his version that he heard it from Rammohun twice, we must accept that the journey was undertaken even though for a short period. We must therefore, modify our stand and accept that Rammohun spent three years in Patna and Benares and one year "in the remotest parts of the world". Taking this one year as Rammohun's diversion, one month out of it must have been spent for the journey upto the plateau and one month for the journey back to the plains and ten months for the stay, not altogether improbable for, one can collect information about people in ten months. The question now then is where could he have gone—whether to Lhasa, the holy city of Tibet on a plateau, or to Mount Kailash or Mansarovar. These are, all high-altitude places not very easily accessible (yet frequently visited by travellers and pilgrims). This matter has to receive special enquiry because in Rammohun's own writing, the words are "... remotest parts of the world, in plains as well as in hilly lands . ." and elsewhere "beyond the borders of Hindoosthan. . .", in other words, there is no mention of place. We may set at rest all speculations by accepting Carpenter's version that Rammohun spoke about "Tibet-travel" twice in his talk with him.

The only warning that remains to be given is that none should connect Rammohun's early travels with Bhutan Mission of 1814. The latter Mission was a deputation of Krishnakant Bosu and Rammohun Roy organised on behalf of the Government (E.I. Company). It has to be remembered that the original reference quoted above from *Tuhfat* was published long ago in 1804. That Rammohun went to Tibet (Bhutan being a part of Tibet at that time) rightly gained currency as a public event from the year 1815 and if it gained currency earlier, it must have been based on his first travel (between 1790-94).

The conclusions about Rammohun's wanderings upto 1794 are essentially based on the two points (1) his leaving home upon a bitterness with his father on religious questions, (2) his recall by his father when he came to know the whereabouts

in Benares after about four years sometime in 1794-95. The biographical frame has hinged on these two salient points. We shall now try to show why, in spite of doubts expressed by no less an authority than Miss Sophia Dobson Collet about the authenticity of the life-sketch, we consider that Arnot's letter should be accepted as dependable.

Sandford Arnot and Autobiographical Sketch of Rammohun Roy

Regarding the points stated at the beginning of Chapter 4, on the year of Rammohun's birth, our stand has been taken on the letter, dated October 5, 1833, to Gordon of Calcutta which was published by his secretary Sandford Arnot in the "London Atheneum" and the "Literary Gazette" about a week after Rammohun's death. Dr. Lant Carpenter^{2A} refers to this autobiographical sketch in *A Review of the Labours, opinions and character of Raja Rammohun Roy* (London 1833) and calls the letter spurious on the basis of the opinion that Miss Collet³ expressed on this sketch. A biographer of the standing of Miss Collet who did a very useful work by collecting, as far as possible, the details of Rammohun's life from different sources in India and England well deserves the high appreciation of her invaluable service. In this particular detail, however, we are reluctant to accept her view since she has not given reasons. Miss Collet could not probably rise above a natural annoyance towards Arnot for Arnot's history casts a reflection on his honesty in respect of money-matters. Miss Collet's prejudice against Arnot is fully justified but for that reason alone, we cannot disregard Arnot's recollections of Rammohun's views and feelings in respect of various other matters which Arnot observed while in close contact. We have to accept Arnot's own observations on Rammohun's religious views and other experiences.

In this matter, it is found that Max Muller has also deviated from Miss Collet's view about Arnot. Max Muller observe† :

"There is a letter, supposed to have been written by Rammohun Roy shortly before he left England for France, and

addressed to Mr. Gordon of Calcutta. It was first published in the *Atheneum*, after the Rajah's death October 5, 1833, by Mr. Sandford Arnot, who had acted as the Rajah's secretary during his stay in England . . . whether the Rajah wrote or dictated the whole of it may be doubted, but to reject the whole as a fabrication would be going much too far." (*Biographical Essays*, London, 1884).

Though Max Muller's tone about the undependability of the sketch is not emphatic still it is not free from bias⁴ against Arnot in this respect. He casts a doubt "whether the Rajah wrote or dictated. . .", but we feel that there is apparently no reason to be suspicious on this point. We, on the other hand, feel that the language of the construction of the letter gives almost a clear indication of Rammohun's authorship of the note on his life.

The charge of the lack of historical sequence in the events given in the sketch is one on which we can argue very reasonably that Rammohun was (may not be in a tract or in any organised way) against "Suttee" practice even at his early age. When Rammohun was studying in Benares (1798-99, 1800-03) he used to go to the Benares-ghats to implore and dissuade the people from this horrible and many other equally inhuman practices. In short, the charge of inconsistency is untenable and can also be explained by saying that in a short note or letter of this type, the sequence of events is never thought of.

NOTES

1. "Rammohun's father Ramkanta was in Murshidabad in the service of the Nawab of Bengal upto a time after which upto his death he was in service under Burdwan Raj. His other brothers (six more) were in Patna, Murshidabad and in other places in service and in agricultural farming. It was a family of high class Brahmins originally devoted to priestly occupation. It appears that the family gave up priestly occupation three generations before. At no time

did the family acquire a reputation for learning—it was engaged in secular activities.”

2. Dr. Lant Carpenter thinks that the alleged bitterness between Rammohun and his parents at the age of 16 is a fabrication of Arnot since Rammohun never mentioned this to him. He only said that at the age of 15 he left home and lived for a time in Tibet. I am of the opinion that what Rammohun said has been rightly stated by Carpenter, but probably in England Rammohun did not like to stress the bitterness between him and his parents as it must have been taken as a strictly family affair. Yet the fact of bitterness need not be doubted, for in an orthodox home, it is not possible for a boy of 15 to leave his paternal shelter without sufficient cause, and this cause must have been his friction with the parents. Arnot could exaggerate for his own advantage, but would he concoct and publish a story in a week's time with so many details for no personal gain ?

- 2A. Lant Carpenter in his biographical sketch *Review of the labours, opinions, character of Raja Rammohun Roy* inserted first in the *Bristol Gazette* (published in 1833) and then in the *Bristol Mercury* during the week following the Raja's death included the following :

“The unexpected and in some views premature death of the eminent and extraordinary person . . . without disputing the authority of his father he often sought from him, information as to the reasons of his faith, he obtained no satisfaction. He, at last, was determined at the early age of fifteen to leave the paternal home and sojourn for a time in Tibet that he might see another form of religious faith. He spent two or three years in that country and often excited to anger the worshippers of the Lama—When he returned to Hindustan he was received by him (father) along with great consideration.”

This being a publication in 1833, there could not occur any gap of time for myth to grow around Rammohun.

3. Sophia Dobson Collet (1822–1894) wrote the first biography of Rammohun with the title *Life and Letters of Raja Rammohun Roy*. She took pains to collect data from Indian friends and also from such records as were available in England from people who were connected directly or indirectly with him. She could not complete her writing as her physical condition became very bad and she handed it over to a very good friend of hers, Rev. Herbert Stead, who acted as continuator. The result is that the final portion contains Stead's own ideas and feelings on the subject. This is why Miss Clara Collet has observed in her letter (9.11.1933) to Dr. P.K. Sen that the last pages (148–157 in the 1st edition) are admittedly

Stead's own summary of the impression left on him at the end of his survey of the life and character of his subject. But in conception, outline, materials and in all but concluding literary execution, the work is and remains Miss Collet's. She has given us a remarkable work, the first biography of Rajah Rammohun Roy in English. (for further particulars, see Appendix at the end).

4. Why Max Muller doubted the veracity of the sketch is not stated anywhere just as Miss Collet did not do so.

Tuhfat-Ul-Muwahhidin (Or a Gift to The Deists)

THE book *Tuhfat-Ul-Muwahhidin*¹ written in Persian with an introduction in Arabic was published by Rammohun in 1804. He must have been at this work just for a short period while he was quite young (our surmise is that he wrote it when he was studying at Patna or very soon after that). The book was written in a language more abstruse than elegant and it is full of logical and philosophical terms which rendered its translation into English extremely complicated. It was written for the Ulemas in particular and for the Intelligentsia in general. Its theme is largely an analysis of the factors which go into the formation of religious convictions. It is a strong plea for rational approach to the study of religions and for shedding sectarianism. From the English translation (done by Maulavi Obaidullah)^{1A} of this book, some important topics are presented below. Rammohun discussed some aspects of the essentials and non-essentials of the religions of India and the following important topics may be usefully quoted for the readers to have a preliminary idea (we think the materials of the book were sorted out and put in book form sometime in his 18th or 19th year of age although it made its appearance in 1804):

- (1) ² On the analysis of every religion, its truths, its falsities
Tuhfat says :

. . . hence it is evident that a man having adopted one particular religion with such firmness, his sound mind after reaching the age of maturity with acquired knowledge of books, without being inclined to make enquiries into the truth of the admitted propositions of so many years, is insufficient to discover the real truth. Rather, that very man sometimes in the hope of attaining the honour of being mujahid or religious expounder, becomes anxious to invent new arguments founded on so-called reason and tradition by the help of his own knowledge and intellect in order to give strength to the doctrines of his faith. . . (p. 3)

Again *Tuhfat* says :

. . . .The state of influence of these leaders over their followers and their submission to them have reached such a degree that some people having a firm belief in the sayings of the leaders, think some stones and vegetables or animals to be the real object of their worship; and in opposing those who may attempt to destroy those objects of worship or to insult them they think of shedding the blood of others or sacrificing their own lives, an object of pride in this world and a cause of salvation in the next. . . (p. 4)

(2) On the distinction between habit and nature *Tuhfat* emphasises :

- (a) Man's environmental influences from childhood, his religious proclivities, his reactions to the existing social notions, his special attachments, his rejections lead him to special beliefs.
- (b) Man's inner nature, revealed through perception at different layers, tries to assert itself against all external forces. It craves for lasting values, as it passes through the mysteries of life; it leads him to the belief in Creator God or Nature. *Tuhfat* says :

... there is always an innate faculty existing in the nature of man, that, in case any person of sound mind, before or after assuming the doctrines of any religion, makes an enquiry into the nature of the principles of religious doctrines, primary or secondary, laid down by different nations, without partiality and with a sense of justice, there is a strong hope that he will be able to distinguish the truth from untruth and the true propositions from the fallacious ones and. . .(p. 6)

Tuhfat again says :

... These persons do not make any distinction between the beliefs which are the results of a special training and habit and an absolute belief in the existence of the source of creation, which is an indispensable characteristic in mankind, so that, they, through the influence of habit and custom and blindness to the enquiry into the sequence between the cause and effect, believe the bathing in a river or worshipping a tree or being a monk and purchasing forgiveness of their crimes from the high priests etc. (according to the peculiarities of different religions) to be the cause of salvation and purification from sins of a whole life. And they think that this purification is the effect of those objects of their beliefs and the miracle of their priests. . . Oh God, give me strong power for making distinction between habit and nature. (pp. 7-8)

- (3) Of man's ultimate realisation or salvation, for which he needs no intermediary or mediation of prophets (or *gurus*), *Tuhfat* says :

... there is no necessity of an intermediate agency for guidance to salvation and there does not seem any necessity of instrumentality of prophets or revelation. . . there would be a series of intermediate agencies which would not conclude to any end. Hence advent of prophets and revelation like other things in nature depend upon external causes without reference to

God, i.e., they depend upon the invention of an inventor . . .” (p. 14)

(4) Miracle or supernatural analysed. *Tuhfat* says :

It is customary with common people labouring under whims that when they see any act or thing done or found, beyond their power of comprehension or for which they cannot make out any obvious cause, they ascribe it to supernatural power or miracle. The secret lies in this, that in this world where things are mutually related to one another by sequent relation of cause and effect, the existence of everything depends upon a certain cause and condition so that, if we take into consideration the remote causes, we may say that in the existence of any one thing in nature the whole universe is connected. But when for want of experience and through the influence of whims, the cause of a thing remains hidden in anyone, another person having found it a good opportunity for achieving his object ascribes it to his own supernatural power and thereby attracts people to himself. In the present age in Indias, belief in supernatural and miraculous things has come to such a degree that the people. . . ascribe it to them and although there be an obvious existence of its cause, they ignore it. But it is not hidden to those who have a sound mind and who are friends of justice . . . Moreover, what necessity is there that we should believe in these things which are inconsistent with the laws of perception and are not observed personally, for instance rising of the dead, ascending to heaven, etc., which are said to have occurred many hundred years ago. . .” (pp. 8-10)

(5) On rationality as the bed-rock of all sound thinking, belief and moral conviction *Tuhfat* says :

The fact of God’s endowing each individual of mankind with intellectual faculties and senses, implies that he should not, like other animals, follow the examples of his fellow

brethren of his race, but should exercise his own intellectual power with help of acquired knowledge, to discern good from bad, so that this valuable divine gift should not be left useless. (p. 19)

Again according to *Tuhfat* :

When enquiries are made about the mysteries of these things which are so wonderful that reason hesitates to believe in their truth, the leaders of religion sometimes explain for the satisfaction of their followers that in the affairs of religion and faith, reason and its arguments have nothing to do; and that the affairs of religion depend upon faith and divine help. How could a matter which has no proof and which is inconsistent with reason be received and admitted by men of reason? "Take admonitions from this, O people of insight" (an Arabic phrase from the *Koran*). (p. 10)

(6) *Tuhfat* says about the next world :

As the foundation of religions is based on the belief in the existence of soul (which is defined to be a substance governing body) and on the existence of the next world, which is held to be the place of receiving compensation for the good and evil deeds done in this world after the separation of the soul from the body they (mankind) are to be excused in admitting and teaching the doctrine of existence of soul and the next world although the real existence of soul and next world is hidden and mysterious for the sake of the welfare of the people (society) as they simply, for the fear of punishment in the next world and the penalties inflicted by the worldly authorities, refrain from commission of illegal deeds. But to the belief in these two indispensable doctrines, hundreds of useless hardships and privations regarding eating and drinking, purity and impurity, auspiciousness and inauspiciousness, etc., have been added and this they have become causes of injury and detrimental to social life and sources of trouble and bewilderment to the people, instead of tending to the amelioration of the condition of society. (p. 5)

Rammohun brought out this book, which was remarkable considering that it was written in his early youth about two centuries ago. It disclosed his serious thinking, dispassionate approach to sociological and psychological problems and his bold conviction grounded on reasoning and logical approach. It bore at times traces of commonplace reasoning but also some marks of free and forceful thinking, keeping Islam constantly in view. These writings must have started long before the book was published, probably, before he took up *Vedanta* seriously. His maturer thinking on religions came after several years of stay in Patna and in Benares at different times, and his study of the *Upanishads* made him a confirmed monotheist.

Rammohun has exposed in this book how persons try to explain away glaringly wrong practices and notions existing in society, which he would straightaway put under the category of "falsity". On the other hand, certain apparent falsities which may be only discrepancies should be viewed as changes in the social thinking with the changing laws from age to age. Rammohun said :

"My reply to this argument is that the ruling or government of the true God Who according to belief of the followers of religions is acquainted with the particular state of every particle and Who is omniscient and to Whom the past, present and future are equally known and under Whose influence hearts of mankind can be turned to whatever. He wishes and Who is the provider of visible, invisible causes of everything and Who is far from having any particular object for His own interest and Who is free from whims; has no analogy with the rulings or governments of human beings, whose wisdom is defective and incapable or understanding the end of every action and who are liable to errors or mistakes and whose actions are mixed with selfishness, deceit and hypocrisy. (p. 15)

Rammohun's role in the brochure Tuhfat

For the purpose of this brochure, it matters little if the

stand taken is that of a theist or a deist, since the points taken up in it are independently valid. But the fact remains that the brochure bears the phrase "A Gift to the Deist". Without devaluing the excellence of the translation, it will be proper to say that the translator seems to have been rash in using these words to mean them to give the impression that Rammohun had only extolled deism. It is evident from some portion of the book that Rammohun has well extolled monotheism also. A faithful translation would have stressed neither "deists" nor "theists" but only "the believers of the 'one' (God)."

Criticisms of Tuhfat

Tuhfat has discussed some of the common failings of man, particularly of the *ulemas* whose irrationality was based on traditional practices, convenient interpretations of the scriptures for the satisfaction of selfish interests. In this matter, Rammohun has been downright in his criticisms and observations in the hope that this might turn their minds in the right direction. Rammohun, of course, knew that no improvement could ever come where self-interest was so deeply involved. *Tuhfat* was meant not only for the Muslim priestly class, but also for the people in general whether Mohamedans or Hindus with a similar bent of mind. It is in the form of *mutazilism* and is replete with technical terms of Islamic logic³ and scholastic Arabic vocabulary. Its Persian is highly arabicised and it is a scholarly production, yet it cannot be said that the book is a highly mature production.

Tuhfat shows how Rammohun was influenced by European ideas such as, utilitarianism, deism and historical criticism. It is a work in which Rammohun argued against closed minds dominated by preconceived ideas. The book discloses his utter aversion to accepting the traditional aspects of religion without questioning their importance and the socially injurious practices without any criticism.

It is worthwhile stating that Prof. Ghazi has in all fairness and simplicity drawn our attention to a rather forgotten side of the *Koran* and remarked : "Rammohun Roy's direct attack

on Islam, the *Koran* and Prophet is fierce and it is expressed in a very strong language...the muslim translation, perhaps in view of his co-religionists, has rendered some words in a milder form and omitted others ..”

In this connection it is of special interest to be acquainted with the editorial note in the recent edition of *Tuhfat* :

“...unfortunately the two verses of the *Koran* referring to idolators quoted by him have been misinterpreted. They do not refer to the idolators or polytheists in general, rather they refer to those idolators or polytheists who were at war with the Muslims in Mecca and violated the treaty they had made with them...”

The following lines will clear the position :

“The clear exception of the last verse shows that by “idolators” are meant not all idolators or polytheists wherever they may be found in the world, not even all idolators of Arabia, but only idolatrous tribes of Arabia assembled at the pilgrimage who had first made agreement with the muslims and then violated them.”

“...In both cases, description of the Prophet and the *Koran* (or a view of its verses) as mischievous fabrications is extremely harsh and it is specially provocative coming from one who fully knew the position of the Prophet and the *Koran* to muslim religious life.”

Though Rammohun made strong criticisms in *Tuhfat* of Islam and the Prophet on certain points, his reverential attitude towards the Mahomedan creed in general and his high appreciation for Mahomed in particular as a leader and reformer of the very highest type remain unquestioned. Prof. Ghazi has portrayed Rammohun in the most glowing colours :

“In Rammohun’s early iconoclasm and readiness to suffer for his views we see a direct inspiration from Prophet Mahomed’s Meccan life. Roy’s sensitive mind was sure to

view the Prophet as a great reformer. There were definite parallels, as Roy would have noticed because of his Islamic training, between the degradation of Arab society in the Prophet's time and the idolatry, superstition, moral decadence, social disintegration, sexual laxity, position of women and other social ills of Hindu society in his own time. How the Prophet's reform transformed a backward tribal society into a creative ethical and social force surely captured his imagination. India needed nothing short of total reform for regeneration. Roy was the reformer of his age. With no other historical figure except the Prophet could he have compared himself and his task so closely. In my opinion Rammohun's passion for theism, his uncompromising iconoclasm and his zeal for reform can be best understood by seeing them in the light of the career of the Prophet."

Prof. Ghazi's sincere criticism of Rammohun is illuminating and gives a new direction to our thinking. There does not seem any doubt that Muslim life was much simpler and he was much attracted by it. In course of time, even when he became a Vedantist, he retained some salient points of Islam and Christianity as his guide.

From a perusal of *Tuhfat*, it could be seen that the author discussed, analysed and included various matters relating to habit, nature, intuition, miracle, reason, intermediary, supernatural and also entered into the book a strong plea for deism. *Tuhfat*, written in Persian, was translated into English by Moulavi Obaidullah who qualified the book with the words "A Gift to Deists". It seems that even the Preface-writer Rajnarain Bose indirectly endorsed this view of the translator :

"It marks the period when he had just emerged from the idolatry of his age but had not yet risen to the sublime theism and theistic worship.. proclaimed..."

Confirmation of this comes also from the trend of thought expressed by Rammohun in his approach to theism as will be

seen, for example, in respect of the query :—

“Whether it is compatible with reason to be convinced of our own inability to understand the cause or to attribute it to some impossible agency inconsistent with the law of nature ?” (p. 9)

to which his reply was : “I think our intuition will prefer the first.”

Further indication of his deism can be had from the following :

“The followers of different religions sometimes seeing the paucity of the number of Deists in the world boast that they are on the side of the majority. It is to be seen that the truth of a saying does not depend upon the multiplicity of the sayers and the non-reliability of a narration cannot arise simply owing to the paucity of the number of the narrators.” (p. 19)

These are indications of his deistic leaning and yet in the same book *Tuhfat*, Rammohun gave quotations supporting the other contention :

“Whom God leads (to righteous path) there is none to mislead him and whom he mislead there is no leader for him.” (*Koran*)

Another quotation to the above nature may be given from *Tuhfat* :

“Man has an innate faculty in him by which he can infer that there exists a Being who (with His wisdom) governs the whole universe...Some of them believe in a God qualified with human attributes as anger, mercy, hatred and love; and others...inclined to atheism.” (p. 7)

These are ennobling thoughts in the *Tuhfat*. They must have impressed him long ago. It seems he wrote *Tuhfat* much earlier than 1803 (just the time when he was influenced by *Vedanta*), we are inclined to think that this work was taken up

on completion of his stay in Patna in 1792-93. This is borne out by the fact that *Tuhfat* drew no material, no parallel from, nor mentioned, his Vedantic studies. Since he had made some progress in Vedanta by 1800, some mention of it or slight reflection of it would have been irresistible. We surmise from all evidence that he must have completed the book by 1796-97 if not earlier. The fact is, the printing was in 1804 but on the testimony of Kissory Chand Mitra the book was not to be circulated till after his death. There is no mention of this instruction anywhere else and if we have to go by the statement of Kissory Chand, he issued this instruction perhaps because he expressed himself strongly against the Prophet and the Koran in some point or it may also be that Rammohun outgrew some ideas given in the *Tuhfat*.

Rammohun started life with a repulsion against idolatry and got the first shelter under Muslim monotheism. Rammohun naturally felt attracted to Muslim learning, its theology and the muslim way of life but his interest and curiosity for knowing Vedanta (having already had some talks on Vedanta from Hariharananda at a younger age) was as strong as ever. In Benares when he began to study Vedanta, he was so full of higher concepts and he found infinite bliss in them. As he grew in years, he found Christianity, its ethics to be of great value for practical life among different peoples of different denominations, he thus had the best of Muslim thought and culture, best of Christian ethics and its ideology and the best of Hindu concepts of the supreme being.

Towards the end of the book, Rammohun wrote :

“These few sentences...have been written without any regard to men of prejudice and bigotry, with this hope that people of sound mind will look to this with a view of justice. I have left the details of it to another work of mine entitled *Manazarutul Adyan* (Discussion of various Religions). In order to avoid any future change in this book by copyists, I have got these few pages printed just after composition.”

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Deism, Mutazilism and Wahhabi Movement

While we are on *Tuhfat* and discussing the appropriateness or otherwise of using the term deism to the theme of the book, it is necessary to know the essential contents of the term and to what extent these contents have been discussed in *Tuhfat*. It has been observed in the main text of ours that though deistic influence is apparent, the theistic influence can not be ignored. The next important matter to be examined is how far deistic influence is found in Hinduism and in Islam. On the basis of rationality which each religion has, it can be called deistic even if the major and essential trait, that Nature once-created is independent of the creator, is absent. It can be asserted with sufficient certainty that in both Hinduism and in Islam, this deistic influence is absent unless one tries to maintain otherwise by equivocation. In both these religions, rationality is the common element and plays an important role.

Deism—Religion as science

Since Newton discovered the laws of Nature⁷ by actual observations, experiments and by mathematical support and since social scientists like Locke came to the conclusion that man's ideas, values and attitudes were governed almost entirely by his society, environment and upbringing, it was thought that it would be also possible, in course of time, to find a scientific basis for religion too. Thus they went too far to think of a scientific religion, religion as a science or in other words, a religion from which all unverifiable elements would be eliminated. Thus the concept became current that the universe, in its eternal career, was working according to scientific laws without any intervention from the Creator. This concept forms an essential part of deism. The second element, a corollary of the first, is rational interpretation, rational approach and rational acceptance of all that takes place in human life, religion or elsewhere. While both these elements of deism had an attraction in the 17th and 18th centuries for men of science in particular, the attraction for a scientific

religion did not last long as will be seen from the following :

“This movement of religious thought known as deism was of comparatively brief duration. Its rapid rise into notoriety, its shortlived prevalence and its gradual subsistence, all fall within the limits of a single century... its epitaph was pronounced in 1790.....nor is the speedy exhaustion of interest difficult to explain.”

The second element, rationality, appeals universally to all serious and thoughtful people. Rammohun exhibited rational thinking from a very early age. He was all for rationality, which pervaded his thoughts and activities in all periods of life as a faith. But to say that “Rammohun initiated a movement by reviving the deistic and unitarian heritage of Islam, Hinduism and Christianity” would be very far from true.⁸ He desired reason but did not fully subscribe to deism as it would negate theism in any form.

Chronologically, deism developed a thousand years after Mahomed and early Islam was dominated by commandments. It was after his death that Arab Muslims spread over Syria, Egypt, Mesopotamia and Persia, the centres of Greek learning, and it was at this time (about 800 A.D.) that many Arab Christians began to translate Greek works and studied other materials of Greek civilisation, discarding mythology, drama and literature, which never suited the Arabs. The Arab contact with the Greeks worked exclusively for benefit of the Arabs and Greek cosmology entered Muslim theology and thought.

It was at this time that philosophical thought began to take shape through contact with Greco-Christians, about God's omnipotence and justice, freedom of Human will and God in relation to the world. They then began to hold that “Allah causes all the actions of men as well as everything happening in the world according to his inexorable and eternal law of predestination. At the same time, men are capable of free action for which they are rewarded and punished, “These ideas do not indicate deism,

But once freedom of action is given to man, the gate is opened for new ideas, new currents of thought in religion. As time began to pass, a vast expansion of territories under the Muslims inevitably brought new orientations to their religion, and the pristine purity of Islam began to change and its rich and rigid qualities began to make compromises in different lands and climes. They began to be tinged or even modified by new intellectual and secular currents, whether willingly, or unwillingly as a world force generated by the special circumstances of changing times. Hence the original austerity made room for liberalism and rationality as advocated and encouraged by Rammohun in changed circumstances. Rammohun came under the influence of deism through western science at the end of the 18th century for a very short period, until he was drawn towards Vedanta.

In short, it is clear that outside influences had their impact on Islam, but that cannot be taken as a laxity or corruption. Cantwell Smith, taking a purist's stand, wrote :—

“In the first Islamic movement in the modern period were protests against the internal deterioration. They would call a halt to decadence, summoning muslim-society back to its first purity and order.”

Mutazilism—the Seceders from Islam

In Islam, grew a rebel group, who maintained that freedom of Will and power of action existed side by side in man. Their thought was largely theo-centric. These positions may be consistent theologically but not philosophically. In Islam we find, referring to the rebel Mutazilites that they call themselves “people of unity and justice” because they believe in the unity of the Godhead which goes under the appellation montheism and they also believed in the even-handed justice of God. They hold that man has both freedom of Will and power to act, and they also hold that from men's actions evils are generated. Mutazilites are free thinkers guided by rationality and reason and they believe that the *Koran* is not co-eternal and hence they are thought to be heretics. But the

fact is that they believed in the Prophet.” (*Encyclopedia Britānnica*.)

Further, “Though Mutazilism was rejected, it tinged Islam with rationality. It is said that the triumph of al-Ashari was the triumph of genuine Arabic religion. To us however, the dogmatic efforts of those who walked in the footsteps of al-Ashari, al-Maturidi and their friends are too intellectualist to be interesting in a religious sense. Had not mysticism, in course of time, acquired a place in official Islam, chiefly through the influence of al-Ghazali, the Muslim religion would have become a lifeless form” (*Muslim Creed* by A.J. Wensinck). It is well to remember that Islam was influenced by *Mutazilism* but it should also be remembered that it could not do much.

Wahhabi Movements

In Hindu India, Rammohun and his followers were propagating reforms vigorously despite strong opposition from the orthodox section. Looking at the Muslim world, it would be patent that as the spread of Islam was phenomenal all over the world, alarming and awe-inspiring for over a thousand years, the intensity of religious fervour was continually abating. In Arabia, its main centre, this deterioration was clearly observed, and a reform movement⁹ was started in the middle of the 18th century by Mohamnad ibn Abd-al-Wahhabi (1703-1787). Round about 1820 echoes of the Wahhabi movement reached India. The main features of the movement, as put by Cantwell Smith, were :

It (classical Islam) rejected the corruption and laxity of the contemporary decline. It rejected too the accommodations and cultural richness of the medieval empire. It rejected the introvert warmth and other-worldly piety of the mystic way. It rejected also the alien intellectualism not of philosophy but of theology. It rejected all dissensions, even the now-well-established Shiah. It insisted solely on the law. The classical law, said the Wahhabi, is the sum and substance of the faith—obey the pristine law, fully, strictly and

singly and establish a society where that law obtains. This, they preached, is Islam. All else is superfluous and wrong.

A section of Muslims thought that this decline was due to their fall from the true and original tenets of Islam. The most important figure in this movement in India was Waliyullah of Delhi (1703-1752) and he influenced Sayyid Ahmed of Rae-Bareilly. The movement spread eastward to Bengal, particularly the eastern half. Its main object was to bring back Islam to its pristine purity and to strict adherence to the original Muslim practices. It was therefore essentially a revivalist movement¹⁰ in which new reforms were not contemplated. What was contemplated was that the Muslims must "obey the pristine law, fully, strictly and singly and establish a society where that law obtains."

Under the Wahhabi movement the sectional Faraidi movement was active in Bengal from 1830 to 1860. While the Wahhabi movement was essentially religious, it received political tinge from the Faraidi movement¹¹. This movement was a reflection of the main movement in which anti-Hindu feelings predominated, ostensibly because the landlords in Bengal were largely Hindus. The Muslims regarded them as poachers, and asserted that the cultivators should hold the land and pay tax to the state for the right to cultivate it. The Wahhabi movement was started in India by Sayyid Ahmed of Rai-Bareilly (who at one time declared himself an Imam) and it was led by Titu Miyan in Bengal. The Faraidi movement was led by Sariatullah, and he travelled all over the Bengal country-side spreading dissatisfaction against the Hindu land-lords and the British administration. But its impact on the administration was small, resulting only in local clashes over long period. What was however noticeable was that the Wahhabis were specially against the Sikhs in north India at one time, much later against the Hindus in East Bengal, and throughout against the British. Though the religious aspect of the movement did not last long, as a whole, it lasted more than 50 years.

NOTES

1. In Persian *Tuhfat* means "gift" and *Muwahhidin* means one God (*Wahid* means "one"). Thus the correct English translation of the title of Rammohun's book is "Gift to those who believe in one God".
- 1A. C.R. Bnnerjee of National Library, Calcutta drew my attention to the fact that one Satyen Gupta translated *Tuhfat* into Bengali from original Persian writing. The translation was out in the Journal "*Punnya*". In the preface of this translation, Rammohun stated that his first book *Munazaratul Adyan* was printed in Serampore Press. Obaidullah's translation does not make any mention of it.
2. Strictly speaking, rationality should be distinguished from rationalism, the former synonymous with reasonableness and the latter is a semi-philosophical concept which does not admit of the supernatural or mysticism or full dependence on God or implicit dependence on faith.
3. In the 18th century there were three prominent schools of Islamic learning :
(i) The Delhi Schools specialised in Hadith and Tafsir; (ii) the Lucknow School in Fiqh and Logic, and (iii) the Khairabadi School in Kalam and Philosophy. Hadith is Tradition coming from the sayings of the Prophet, Tafsir is commentary on the *Koran*, Fiqh is Islamic Law and Jurisprudence; and Kalam is scholastic Theology.
4. See Death Centenary Volume (Sadharan Brahma Samaj, Calcutta)
5. See note 3 above.
6. Rammohun retained Muslim attire as a sober, dignified, distinctive and neat Indian dress for any society. He also ate Muslim food on many occasions as more conducive to physical stamina.
7. By studying the sciences, researchers concluded that in the realms of physics, astronomy, mathematics, etc., there were laws which govern the universe and they are independent of God. Originally created by God, the universe moves according to its own laws. When this view was gaining ground, hostility to the church began to grow. Scientists and philosophers like Descartes and Spinoza accepted this deistic philosophy for sometime at least.

8. "It is historically significant that a movement of the kind was initiated by Raja Rammohun Roy in the first quarter of the 19th century in Bengal by reviving the deistic and Unitarian heritage of Islam, Hinduism and Christianity". (N. Mukherjee in his *Rammohun, Islam and Deism*, Humanist Review, 1969).
9. "But the success of the movement became noticeable not in any moral regeneration among them in spite of all their emphasis on better regulation of their religious observances, but in their political consciousness, which resulted in the partition of India in 1947." (Kazi Abdul Wadud, in Silver Jubilee Commemoration Volume, 1950, of the Indian Philosophical Congress).
10. "The failure of the revivalist movements in religion to achieve the moral elevation of man should provide the discerning with food for serious thought.....the sad discomfiture of the intellectuals of our country is perhaps largely due to their being politicians and not genuine intellectuals—the enslaved condition of their motherland was perhaps largely responsible for their inclination towards expediency,—but, all the same, politicians can never be earnest thinkers, they are eternally condemned to opportunism and futility". (Kazi Abdul Wadud, Silver Jubilee Commemoration Volume, 1950, of the Indian Philosophical Congress).
11. The Faraidi movement had its stronghold in Faridpur and Bakhar-ganj in East Bengal and its leader Sariatullah (1781–1840) was a learned Muslim, educated in Delhi and later in Mecca and Al-Azhar University.

Rammohun's Youth and Zamindari Affairs (1795-1798) and other Activities upto 1815

SYNOPSIS OF EVENTS (1795-1815)

- 1795** Rammohun, after 4 years (from 1790) of travel, returned to Benares. On information from Hariharananda, his father recalled him and employed him in his estate.
- 1796** Ramkanta divided his immovable property among his three sons before joining Rani Vishnukumari's estate (Burdwan Raj) as muktear.
- 1798** Rammohun's active estate management ended as he was preparing to go to Benares for study of Hindu Scriptures.
- 1799** The estates of Govindapur and Rameshwarpur were purchased—he left for Benares and thus avoided family unpleasantness.
- 1803** He returned from Benares and acted as private munshi to Woodford in Dacca. On hearing of his father's illness, he resigned and returned home. When his father died he returned to Calcutta.
- 1804** He became private munshi to Woodford in Murshidabad. His first book, *Tuhfat-ul-Muwahhidin*, written in Persian, was published.
- 1805** He became private munshi to Digby and went to Bhagalpur, then to Jessore, then came back to Bhagalpur.

1809 He went to Rangpur with Digby in the same capacity. He also worked as adviser to the Udasi estate, Rangpur. Hariharananda Abadhut came to stay with him for some time. Rammohun was engaged in translating the Upanishads into English, Bengali and Hindi. He went on a mission (Government) to Bhutan in 1814-15.

1815 After Digby left Rangpur for his home (Britain), Rammohun stayed on for some time and returned to Calcutta in 1815.

Rammohun could not have started building up a money-lending business in Calcutta till after 1794-1795 without a clear opportunity of saving some cash and that opportunity had come when employed in his father's estate. It is recorded he lent Rs. 7,500 to Hon'ble Ramsay, a civilian and this transaction might have been carried out by his sarkar (agent) Golaknarain Sarkar who also organised the business of purchase and sale of E.I. Company's bonds on Rammohun's behalf. It may be presumed that from 1795 Rammohun not only saved some money from his estate-income but also was able to add from other sources. It has to be remembered that in 1796, he got some property (immovable) from his father. There was also some gift which he might have received from his maternal grandfather, but it is believed that he had got it earlier. It can also be surmised that he borrowed some money from some persons. It appears that his moneylending business was started in 1795 soon after he was employed in the Zamindari estate. This leads us to think that he must have been saving money after joining the estate in 1795 adding it to his previous accumulations.

Ramkanta (father) partitions the immovable property

Rammohun got one-third share of the property. Jugmohun (eldest son) was given another one-third share and Ramkanta (father) kept the remaining one-third share. The distribution may be summarised as follows :

1. Langulpara house given to Jugmohun Roy and Rammohun Roy (jointly),
2. Ramkanta's share of Radhanagar house given to

Ramlochan Roy (step brother of Rammohun),

3. Harirampur Taluk (Burdwan) given to Jugmohun Roy,
4. A house with a pond marked by four boundaries purchased from Ramkrishna Sett at Jorasanko in Mouza Calcutta, given to Rammohun Roy,
5. A small part of self-acquired property and the Burdwan lodging house remaining with Ramkanta Roy.

This partition marks the parting of ways for Ramkanta, Jugmohun and Rammohun. On partition, Ramkanta left for Burdwan and his eldest son Jugmohun for Harirampur to manage his own lands. While Ramkanta was occupied with his property he took the help of Jugmohun to work on the Izara in Bhursoot.¹ Rammohun was engaged in managing his own estate. In 1798, Rani Vishnukumari died and this caused serious distress to Ramkanta and completely upset his plans. The Rani's son Raja Tejchand succeeded her and took over the supervision of the Burdwan estate. He pressed Ramkanta for the dues payable under the conditions of the Izara. In course of time, Rammohun came to know from different sources that his father and brother, both working in close co-operation, were taking recourse to evasions, falsehoods, half-truths and such dishonest means to evade a liability of Rs. 80,000 payable to the Burdwan Raj and a Government liability of Rs. 2,851. He saw that while the Government liability, being small, could be cleared without much difficulty, it was impossible to clear the other dues except by selling off a portion of his estate as would ordinarily be done in such a situation.

Rammohun could see that his father would not do this and both adopted an evasive attitude² to all these debts. He left quietly and went to Benares for study. After the partition of 1796, this encumbered estate came to be the exclusive property of the father. The Burdwan Raj pressed Ramkanta hard and at last brought the matter to Court. For Ramkanta, the situation arising from the combination of arrears of the two parties was serious. Sometime in 1800 Ramkanta was sent

to jail, the Judge who tried him having rejected his plea of inability to pay even the small sum he owed to the Government of Rs. 2,851. Some biographers, without studying the entire case, have accepted Ramkanta's plea of inability to pay and have condemned Rammohun for not coming forward with this small amount of money for the release of his father. It is more than likely that the Judge's strictures were not even seen by these biographers, and that Rammohun was condemned without full enquiry into the matter. The strictures were :

“Ramkanta is in confinement for this balance (Rs. 2,851 and odd) and although he is very able to discharge it, yet as the Raja of Burdwan has a large demand against him for which he knows he will be detained even were he to discharge his balance due to Government, he is therefore backward in paying the amount.” (Statement made by the Collector of Burdwan to the Board of Revenue in June 1800).

In May 1801, Cunningham, a court official, wrote :

“It being well known that Ramkanta Rai, who is a man of property, could, if inclined, immediately discharge the arrears due on account of his farm and also the amount due from his son's estate.”

Although Ramkanta was in jail, he was still trying to work out a way to induce the Burdwan Raj to give him a release. He suggested that he should take on Izara, a large property which yielded annually quite a big income and use this money to clear the loan in eleven years. The scheme was accepted by Burdwan Raj and Ramkanta is said to have cleared half the amount by the time he died in June '1803.

The case against Jugmohun however continued, and regarding his plea of inability to pay anything either to the Government or to the Burdwan Raj, the Judge made very serious remarks in January 1803 in the Dewany jail of Midnapur as follows :

“The defaulter is the son of Ramkanta Roy who formed some very profitable mahals in Burdwan—is said to be worth near two lacs of rupees— I understand that the Raja of Burdwan has a considerable claim upon this man for which, the defaulter, his son becomes his security and that he sometime ago obtained a decree against them in the Dewany Adalaut of Burdwan—it is supposed that in order to prevent the sale of lands held by the defaulter, in satisfaction of this decree, he purposely fell in arrears last year, that he is determined to remain in jail until he can bring the Raja of Burdwan to some sort of adjustment of his demand against him and his father and that as soon as he can effect this, he will pay his balance and not before, under these circumstances, I conclude that the Board will judge it proper that he should remain in jail until he may make good the whole of his balance. (Board of Revenue, *Misc. Proceedings*, 14th January, 1803).

In February 1803, Jugmohun applied to the Collector of Midnapur, that in view of the fact that Ramkanta Roy, who was indebted to the Burdwan Raj for a large amount (about Rs. 80,000) and was unable to pay anything because of impoverishment, had obtained release, Jugmohun, as his surety, being unable to pay, prayed that he however also be released on condition that a lump sum of Rs. 500 be paid immediately and on the balance in agreed instalments. Upon this the Midnapur Collector wrote to the Burdwan Collector in March, to make inquiries. But the Burdwan Collector could not trace Ramkanta in Burdwan. Ramkanta's position must have become so bad that he had to dispose of some properties to clear about half the debt in the next seven months. His health was failing. In the meantime, the Midnapur Collector wrote to the Revenue Board that if Jugmohun would pay Rs. 1,000 in a lump sum and Rs. 150 monthly, then he might be released and the Board might consider, if this proposal was approved, realising only Rs. 3,458 from Jugmohun (from Rs. 5,578 a reduction should be made of Rs. 2,120 for which another person was really responsible). Jugmohun again applied to the Collector in September and offered to pay Rs. 100 per month for 34 months. The Revenue Board accepted the proposal, but

he could not find sureties for the purpose. Ramlochan and Sabhachandra Roy consented to become sureties in October, 1804 and the Board agreed to the scheme. Jugmohun borrowed Rs. 1,000 from Rammohun and was released in February 1805.

It is said that in seven years after this, Jugmohun did not or could not pay a single instalment. It is painful indeed to reflect on the conduct of Jugmohun and also equally painful to reflect on that of Ramkanta, who tried various means to evade payment until detention in jail became unbearable in his failing health, for he died soon after. The conduct of both Ramkanta and Jugmohun confirmed Rammohun's suspicion which had been forming from the time he was acting in close contact with his father and elder brother in 1796-97.

At the time of dividing the property, Ramkanta made his sons completely independent with a clear separate interest for himself. We get a glimpse of his mind in the following :

“Ramkanta allocated a fair share of his immovable property and afterwards never required him to share his losses and troubles...”

We have described the ways of Ramkanta and Jugmohun from 1797 to 1803. Now we shall see what direction Rammohun took for his future. Rammohun was in estate management from 1795-97 fully and then upto 1798 casually. In 1797 and 1798 he visited Calcutta once or twice and then went to Benares for intensive study of the Hindu scriptures in Sanskrit and English. Since he was so busy with his studies, he thought it essential that he should transfer his newly-acquired taluks of Govindapur and Rameshwarpur for efficient management in his absence. With this object Rammohun got them transferred in 1799 to Rajiblochan Roy, a friend and Zamindar of Burdwan. Clearly it was a nominal transfer³—not sale.

He then left for Benares, but before doing so, Rammohun went to his village for a short stay. Records show that in

1801 he appointed Gopi Mohun Chatterjee as his cashier to develop his money-lending business. It is rightly believed that Rammohun had just met Digby in 1801, though his coming to Calcutta appears improbable, interrupting his continuous stay and study at Kashi. We again find Rammohun in Calcutta in 1803 joining Woodford. Radhaprasad was born in Langulpara house in 1800. In 1802 he advanced Woodford Rs. 5000 and this was done by Rammohun's Calcutta Office. Woodford became Collector of Dacca-Jalalpore (Faridpur) in 1803 and appointed Rammohun *khas-munshi* of the Collectorate on the resignation of Kishanchand. Rammohun hardly worked in that capacity for two months when he left for Burdwan to be at the bed-side of his ailing father. Woodford was transferred in the middle of 1803, and at this time Ramkanta died. Rammohun did not participate in the *sradh* ceremony arranged by his mother in orthodox Hindu fashion. Jugmohun could not participate as he was in jail, but his step-brother Ramlochan did so. It is said that Rammohun performed his father's *sradh* in his own way in Calcutta. In August, the same year, Woodford was transferred as Registrar of the Appellate Court at Murshidabad (old Moghul capital of Bengal) and Rammohun was appointed his private Munshi. It was here that Rammohun's first book *Tuhfat-ul-Muwahhidin* was published in 1804.

In February 1805 John Digby became Registrar of the office of the Magistrate of Ramgarh (Hazaribagh) and there Rammohun went to join him as his private Munshi. He continued at Ramgarh upto 1808, and there he held the position of Sheristadar of Fouzdary Court for three months. Then he went to Jessore for a short time with Digby in the middle of 1808 in the role of private Munshi. Digby was next transferred to Bhagalpur as Registrar of the Court there in June 1808. Rammohun went with him and stayed till 1809. Here occurred the memorable incident involving Sir Frederick Hamilton. For the first time, a senior official was censured by Governor General and Rammohun acquired a high stature in public life. In October 1809, Digby was transferred at Rangpur as Collector and Rammohun accompanied him. When the Dewan-ship fell vacant Digby appointed him temporarily. The Board of

Revenue did not agree, and a controversy arose between Digby and the Board. The decision of the Board prevailed.

In 1811, Rajiblochan Roy, Zamindar of Burdwan, to whom a benami transfer was made, executed a Deed of Transfer in favour of Gurudas Mukerjee (Rammohun's sister's son who was a close follower of Rammohun) in respect of the taluks of Govindapur and Rameshwarpur. Up to this time, Rajiblochan was managing Rammohun's estates and was paying him the net revenue of about Rs. 5,500 annually. Rammohun got these taluks transferred to himself in 1812 by a Deed of Sale executed at Rangpur. Thus 12 years passed after the nominal transfer and the real owner got it back. In recognition of this good turn, Rammohun transferred his title to a half share of the ancestral house at Langulpara to Gurudas.

Ramlochan, Rammohun's step brother, died in 1810 while Rammohun's elder brother Jugmohun died in 1812, and his wife performed *suttee*. Shortly after Rammohun went to his village home and stayed there for a while before he returned to Rangpur.

Digby left for England towards end of 1814 but Rammohun continued at Rangpur up to end of 1815, when he got back to Calcutta after winding up his duties in the estate of Udasi, in which he was employed, and after completing his work with Bhutan mission. This mission was an important Government assignment entrusted to Krishnakanta Bosu and Rammohun Roy by the Collector of Rangpur (on behalf of E.I. Company). Its purpose was to settle some issues relating to the demarcation of the boundary lines between the states of Bhutan and Cooch Behar, which fell within the jurisdiction of the East India Company. Roy and Bosu proceeded to Bhutan by following the route—from Goalpara to Bijni—then to Sidli—via Cherang Pachu-Machu Plateau—finally reaching Punakh.

A letter written by the Raja of Bhutan to the Magistrate of Rangpur¹ dated November 12, 1815 and subsequently, Sir Ashley Eden and Capt. Pemberton also bore testimony to the good work done. Assuming that the above letter was written

sometimes after the mission was completed but before Roy had returned to Rangpur, it may be safely asserted that the mission would not have concluded till after the middle of the year. Rammohun could not therefore, have returned to Calcutta earlier than the end of the year.

NOTES

1. Ramkanta kept for himself the estate of Bhursoot which he had taken on Izara for nine years (1791-1800), a house in Burdwan and some more property which he had acquired with his own earning. Tarini Devi remained in charge of the families of her two sons Jugmohun and Rammohun. The accounts of the two brothers were kept separate although they lived in the same house.
2. From this, it is clear that Rammohun with the best intentions was helpless and could do no better than leave the place. Looking ahead that he might be summoned to the Court to give his version, he was perturbed to think that a situation might arise that by telling the truth he would jeopardise his father's position. He therefore left the place without mentioning his destination but it must have been Benares.
3. Purchased on June 15, 1799, and transferred in the same year. As Rammohun had no issue then and was going for off he transferred this as benami to Gurudas Mukherjee (his sister's son).
4. "The Raja of Bhutan is delighted to receive through the addressee's vakils, Ram Mohun Roy and Krishnakanta Basu, a letter accompanying a present of 5 pieces of broadcloth, 5 coats and a telescope. Has forwarded to Lhasa the letter addressed to the two representatives of China posted there. The aforesaid vakils represented that one of them had been ordered to remain with the Raja and the other was to return to Rangpur after informing himself of all the affairs of this place. Ram Mohun Roy is, therefore, being sent back and he will verbally inform the addressee of everything. The lands pertaining to Chamurchi Duars and Rangdhamali Ghat and the ferry of the river Tista had always formed parts of his estates and perquisites and the revenue received therefrom used to be utilised for the Pujas of gods here. Some years back the Raja of Cooch Behar and the Raikat of Baikunthapur forcibly took possession of these lands. When he made a representation to the Governor-General at Calcutta, the latter was pleased to direct the Magistrate to restore his rights to him. The writer, therefore, sent his vakil to the Magistrate but the lands have not yet been restored. If it is

desired to make a close investigation of his title then the evidence of the stone-quarry owners who live in British territory may be taken as regards Rangdhamali Ghat. The ownership of the lands will be established, if the pattas (deeds of lease) and revenue receipts of the ryots of Chamurchi Duar are examined. Further evidence may also be taken from the merchants who come from British territories to deal in dyes—and other articles of trade and they will testify to having paid the duties at Jumkar Ghat on the bank of the river Jaldhaka, south of Chamurchi. Or, a local enquiry may be made by some one on the part of the Magistrate in the presence of the writer's men. Prays that the lands may be restored to him with the collections made by the opposite party during the time that he has been dispossessed. Requests a prompt decision. His vakil may be sent back to him."

P.S. : "From what he has heard of the origin of the war from Roy and Basu it appears that the Gurkhas have wronged the Company in various ways. If they approach the writer in connection with this war their representation will not be heeded. If the Magistrate cannot come for a local enquiry (regarding his possession) then Ram Mohun Roy may be sent back to him with a clear decision in the matter. Ram Parshad Basi (Das ?) will represent further particulars." Dated 21 Aswin, 306. (Received 12 November, 1815)

Sankara, Ramanuja, Chaitanya and Rammohun

SANKARA'S intellectual and spiritual greatness and his philosophical contributions to Hindu thought were of the highest order.¹ At a very early age, he saw a strong Buddhist power ruling large parts of India, and he therefore increasingly impressed on Hinduism his stern orthodoxy to guard it against any fresh attack of Buddhism. In this line of action, he was strengthened by other Hindu thinkers like Kumaril, Prabhakar and Mandanmisra etc. Hinduism thus withdrew, as it were, into a shell for self-protection instead of keeping itself open to absorb external progressive influences or to resist reactionary forces. Today it may be easy to pass a judgment against those master minds, especially Sankara, forgetting that Hindu society had not then all the necessary strength. Since stern measures were adopted for Hinduism, it must have been that Buddhism and Jainism, with their relics were still not a negligible factor. They must also have felt that the continuous spread of Islam in Europe could at any time turn to become a threat to India.

Sankara's stand

Some critics may further say that such stern measures by Sankara clearly indicate his conservatism and show that Sankara and his followers lacked vision for they decreed that

Hindus should conserve their traditions vigorously and with all vehemence discard everything coming from the aliens. It is said against Sankara that the four *muths* in four corners of India were meant to enforce restrictions against crossing beyond these points, i.e., to cross the sea. It is rash to interpret the establishment of the *muths* as Sankara's initiative—they may have been later additions—they were most likely set up by his followers and adherents to mark the places sanctified by Sankara's preachings. One cannot dogmatise that they indicate restrictions or injunctions not to cross the seas.² Probably some prohibition had been in existence from the time of Manu. Manu had an injunction (Ch 3, SL 158) by way of a restriction but it is strongly suspected to have been a later interpolation. It must not be forgotten that India has never given any thought to such kinds of restrictions, for, one knows that however old the story of Ramayana may be, Rama himself crossed the sea to fight Ravana. Let alone such old epics, the fact can not be ignored that India has been known, from a long time past, for its tradition of shipping and for its encouragement to the people for colonisation in the far eastern countries and also for its participation in commercial ventures. From this, the conclusion seems fair that the crossing of the seas must have figured as a later interpolation in the *Manusamhita*, when Hindus were at the mercy of foreign rule.³

Some eminent thinkers of modern time have expressed the view that if the Aryans of ancient times could absorb different shades of alien cultures, certainly with dying Buddhism, such enforcement of strong measures of orthodoxy was not called for. Dr. Radhakrishnan has made this fling at Sankara but he forgot other points.⁴ It is easy for modern thinkers to say this in the present context of good understanding and tolerance amongst nations more than a thousand years after but they forget that in older times the people belonging to small cultural and religious orders with millions of peace-loving common people did not have means to stand in opposition when the strength of the majority rule was incomparably superior. One has to remember that :

“Round about 750 A.D., Bengal suffered from prolonged

anarchy which became so intolerable that the people elected as their King one Gopal," whose son was "Dharmapala was a zealous Buddhist"... "About 1810 Dharmapala, King of Bengal deposed the reigning King of Kanauj replacing him by a nominee of his own—the fact illustrate vividly the disturbed conditions of northern Indian in that age". (*History of India* by Vincent Smith)

Synthesis is a noble idea of modern times and it works to some extent because of centuries of living together specially when the ruling power is less aggressive and more tolerant. Against attempts at synthesis, there are critics no less sarcastic than severe. In this case let it be said to the credit of Sankara that even in this hostile atmosphere, he was able to keep up his intellectual stamina since he assembled his thoughts and systematised them into the Advaita philosophy. In constructing this, he showed not only great devotion, penetrating intellect, spiritual insight but also a personality of rare order.

It is true that the stand-point of the great Hindu seers and philosophers of ancient times about 6th/7th century B.C. was quite different from that of much later thinkers. The ancient Hindu of Aryan descent born in an exclusive home, in a fully disciplined and fettered social structure, had a completely different tradition from birth, a different mode of living and training and environment, and therefore a different attitude towards men and society, and a different ideal of life and significance of living. As a matter of fact, the stand-point of the hoary past and the stand-point of modern times in respect of the highest ideal of life, have been on two distinct levels, with a big and distinct gap between the two. The stand-point of classical Hinduism, contained in Vedic religion, stressed supremacy of control and freedom⁵ from environment, while the modern stand-point is to fraternise with environment and stress social virtues like morality and rationality. As these standpoints differ so fundamentally, it would be meaningless to apply modern standards to judge the society thousand years ago. The great Epics cannot be comprehended—Sankara cannot be comprehended—unless it is realised that others who came later got a ground to stand.

Ramanuja's stand

Time passed and the situation changed all round, social complications pressed hard and man's ideals also changed. His role in the practical day-to-day world asserted itself with new adaptations and with greater insistence. It was no more an abstraction that was of any practical value but man's happiness and wordly success. With the flow of time, new expressions under environmental pressure, human yearnings, from age to age, so long inchoate, outside the pale of philosophical recognition, came to life in the hands of Rammanuja-charya, who with the same materials of the Upanishads established modified philosophy of Visistadvaitism and thus it qualified Sankara's monism. In this faith the world and *Jiva* are distinct realities, so is *Iswara*, the Supreme Being. This qualified monism had been well presented to satisfy *Prasthanatraya*. This brought in Bhakti as the unifying force with Brohmo. Ramanuja thus gave full recognition to Bhakti, as a force which is a means to fusion with *Iswara* (Brohmo). This modified monism found a place next to Advaitism.⁶ Since Bhakti has a large appeal, it became very popular with a larger number of devotees whose hearts responded more easily than would their intellect. Thus this path became much more popular though the intensity and quality of Bhakti [see Appendix II] remained unknown factors in the determination of Bhakti's powerful appeal. The duality thus established in this qualified monism meant a deviation from "oneness" but since *Prasthanatraya*⁷ accepted it its position was secure. There is a view also that Visistadvaitism has a closer connection with Bhagwat-Gita. It does not any more concern itself with the superb conception of oneness, nor needs the high penetrating intellect or an unshakable stamina [see Appendix III] which are essentials for Advaitism.

Chaitanya's stand

Time flowed on and generations decayed leaving questionings and hankerings partially unanswered and unfulfilled until after three centuries two master-minds appeared Ballabhacharyya (1473-1531), and Srikrishna Chaitanya⁸ (1486-

1533), Mahaprabhu of Nabadwip (Bengal), born in the Madhwa sect. Chaitanya's guru was Keshab Bharti, an *advaitin*, but Chaitanya deviated and after an act of renunciation, took to Vaishnavism of his own fashioning. His message was universal love and devotion for the Supreme Purusha. In it, *upasana* is there but devotional outbursts ending in ecstatic fits in huge congregations were the commonest features. Thus Chaitanya's philosophy, based on dualism, emphasised bhakti and devotion to Srikrishna (representing the Supreme Purusha) and then followed love between man and man, culminating in love between man and nature. Thus love flooded man, society and nature. In this all-pervading love, complete renunciation was the substratum and helped man to attain supreme happiness and bliss. Chaitanya's self-effacing surrender to his Deity climaxed his positive achievements of eliminating caste, creed, power and position—all men were bound by love and inspired by Bhakti for the Supreme Purusha. A great social upheaval took place within the shortest possible time, breaking for the first time, all social barriers including untouchability in all forms. It thus elevated society in a unique way. It seemed as if the inequities in the society were eagerly waiting for this great shake-up. For the first time, this humanist movement did enliven the common people also. The message of universal love brought about considerable fraternal intensity among Hindus, Muslims and Christians. In spite of this tremendous success, much time did not pass when the whole movement started to be mechanical—the movement ultimately dragged everything down to extreme vulgarity. Thus Vaishnavism in Bengal degenerated into a complex of low order, particularly after the promiscuous effusions of the followers of Ballabhacharyya.

Rammohun's stand

Three centuries passed over Hindu Bengal, carrying the relics of Tantrism, Jainism, Buddhism Vaishnavism and Rammohun came in the seventies of eighteenth century. He appeared on the scene with a background of all-round moral degeneration, effeminacy, pseudo-religious excesses which had completely replaced Chaitanya's grand conception of universal love and

brotherhood of man. From early age, Rammohun showed sternness in his character which was in reaction to the prevailing order of looseness all around. His thoughtful mind felt the need for austerity in a society marked by laxity and crumbling faiths. With this background, it is no wonder that he felt urged to revive Sankara in all his austerity and even his religious beliefs. He realised the urgency of reconstructing man to usher in modern society by inculcating rational behaviour, rational action and rational⁹ thinking.

Vedantasar and Vedanta Granth of Rammohun

This led him to begin ceaseless campaign against idolatry which, Rammohun found, was the starting point of false reasoning, false interpretation of scriptures, waste of invaluable time in meaningless and childish pastimes under the cloak of unending pujas. These idolatrous observances became the target of Christian missionaries and the muslims and also the non-idolatrous sections all over the land. Rammohun mounted his attack against these by publications on Hindu theology. The first book Rammohun wrote in 1815 was *Vedantasar*. Therein, Rammohun's introduction has clearly stated that the main purport of the Vedas, as a whole, is the emphasis on one God. Rammohun's *Vedanta-Grantha* in Bengali was the translation of the Vedanta Sutra (in 555 sutras). He wrote the substance in English, Bangali, Hindusthani in 1815 under the name *Vedantasar*. The Vedanta Sutra has not referred to any God other than one. In the Vedas wherever many deities have been endowed with large powers, on a careful examination, it will be found that they have not been invested with any special or independent powers. Hence in the English preface he wrote the following :--

“I have observed, that both in their writings and conversation, many Europeans feel a wish to palliate and soften and features of Hindoo idolatry ; and are inclined to inculcate, that all objects of worship are considered by their votaries as emblematical representation of the Supreme Divinity. If this were indeed the case, I might perhaps be led into

some examination of the subject; but the truth is, the Hindoos of the present day have no such views of the subject but firmly believe in the real existence of innumerable gods and goddesses, who possess, in their own departments, full and independent power; and to propitiate them, and not the true God, are temples erected and ceremonies performed. There can be no doubt, however, and it is my whole design to prove, that every rite has its derivation from the allegorical adoration of the true Deity; but at the present day all this is forgotten, and among many, it is even heresy to mention it My constant reflections on the inconvenient, or rather injurious rites introduced by the peculiar practice of Hindoo idolatry which, more than any other pagan worship, destroys the texture of society, together with compassion for my countrymen, have compelled me to use every possible effort to awaken them from their dream of error: and by making them acquainted with their scriptures, enable them to contemplate with true devotion the unity and omnipresence of Nature's God" (Introduction of *Vedantasar*)

Sometime after when the English translation of *Vedantasar* appeared under the title *Translation of an Abridgment of Vedanta*, one Mr. Ellis of Madras who happened to read it brought a charge against Rammohun (See Explanatory Note 2);

EXPLANATORY NOTES

Note 1 : Sankara

In spite of Sankara's greatness and his contribution to India at this time of cultural decline, his moves do not indicate a large vision on his part as could be expected of a genius of his type—on the contrary, his steps were reactionary. His pressure from one side and the pressure from the other side exerted by Kumaril, another equally great genius in the Indian cultural history, combined to play upon the conservative elements in the country. They both directed their great energies to the establishment of Varnashramdharma which some time

ago got a rude shaking from Buddhism firstly and from Vaishnavism latterly. The reestablishment of Varnashramdharma and the vigorous fetters for its consolidation which still survive and bear witness to Sankara's extraordinary abilities show at once the reactionary characters of Sankara's activities in this direction judging even by the ancient standards indicated in the achievements of his predecessors. Their achievements as makers and propounders of systems of philosophical thoughts a thousand years ago showed much greater catholicity of views and breadth of vision than the profoundest commentators or teachers. The contributions of Nagarjun, Kumaril, Prabhakar or Sankara cannot be minimised and Sankara will have an immortal place for his great work of systematisation of Advaita philosophy. In respect of social history, however, it is difficult to assign him a high position. It is possible that Buddhism on one side, Vaishnava cult on the other side, Lokayatavad on the third side, and the rise and spread of Islam on the fourth side made Sankara take this position. Nevertheless the moves were reactionary from those disastrous consequences and India has not yet recovered. It may be contended that Hinduism was saved by this emphasis of Varnashramdharma which is a kind of retirement into a shell but it is a poor consolation for us and a feeble compliment to such teachers whose efforts ought to have met any crisis more boldly to raise India to a higher synthesis contributing to a greater freeness and elasticity of mind. If Hindu thought could absorb different shades of alien thoughts throughout its long career certainly with dying Buddhism, such an emphasis on caste system and such other fetters only showed the workings of a conservative mind. Subsequent events in Indian social and philosophical history show the gradual triumph of conservative elements until it came to a dull period. This is bound to be the process once the reactionary traits of human nature are given prominence. (Radhakrishnan's *Indian Philosophy*)

Note 2 : Rammohun and Ellis

In August 1817, after Rammohun's *Vedanta Grantha* and other publications on Vedanta had appeared, Mr. Ellis of the Madras literary group, took it into his head to charge Ram-

mohun with plagiarising Robert de Nobili by writing pseudo-Vedas in the name of Vedanta. Ellis meant that Rammohun was out to destroy the belief of the Hindus in their religion. It is difficult to say what Ellis' intention was in making this charge. There was a general suspicion that Ellis wanted to arouse the Hindus against Rammohun and drive him to accept Christian faith. The charge of literary forgery made against Rammohun led to the calling of a meeting of the Asiatic Society at Calcutta at which Mr. Harington presided. The records show the following :—

An interesting paper was read, written by Mr. Ellis, communicating a curious instance of literary forgery, or rather religious imposition. In 1778 a book was printed at Paris entitled *L' Ezour Vedam*, containing the exposition of the opinions of the Indian priests and philosophers, and said to be translated from the Sanscrit by a Brahmin. It was said in the preface that the work was originally among the papers of M. Barthelemy, a member of Council at Pondichery, that M. Moldave brought a copy of it from India, and presented it to Voltaire, who sent it in 1761 to the Library of the King of France. Voltaire had been informed that the chief-priest of Cherengham, distinguished for his knowledge of the French language, and the services he had performed for the India Company, was the translator of the *Ezour Vedam*, and appears to have believed it an authentic work. M. Anquetel du Perron was of the same opinion; M. Sonnerat, however seems to have detected the error, and describes the *Ezour Vedam* as not genuine, but the composition of a missionary at Masulapatam, sous le manteau Brame. Mr. Ellis has since ascertained that the original of this work still exists among the manuscripts in the possession of the catholic missionaries at Pondicherry, which are understood to have belonged originally to the Society of Jesuits. Besides the *Ezour Vedam*, there are also among these Manuscripts imitations of the other three Vedas each of them in Sanscrit, in the Roman character and in French. Mr. Ellis enters into a philological investigation of the Manuscripts to shew that whether the author were a native or a European, the work must either

have originated in the provinces of Bengal, Orissa, or have been composed by some one who had there learned the rudiments of Sanscrit. He then gives a list of the manuscripts in the possession of the Catholic Missionaries and their contents:—they are eight in number. One of them concludes by denying the divinity of Brahma, and asserting him to have been a man in all respects resembling other human beings. They are all intended to refute the doctrines, and shew the absurdity of the ceremonies, inculcated by the Brahmins. The native Christians at Pondicherry are of opinion that they were written by Robertus de Nobilibus, a near relation of his holiness Marcellus II. and the nephew of Cardinal Bellarmine, who founded the Madura mission, about the year 1620. This personage appears to be well known both to Hindoos and Christians, under the Sanscrit title of Tatwa-bod'ha-swami, whose writings on polemical theology are said to resemble greatly the controversial parts of the pseudo-Vedas, discovered by Mr. Ellis. That learned gentleman thinks it not improbable that the substance of them as they now exist, is from his pen, and that they consisted originally, like his works in Tamil, of detached treatises on various controversial points, and that some other hand has since arranged them in the present form, imposed on them a false title, transcribed them into the Roman character, and translated them into French. It is said however that the manner, style, form and substance, of the pseudo-vedas do not bear the most distant resemblance to the writings whose titles they assume. Mr. Ellis gives an elaborate analysis of the real Vedas and compares them particularly with forgeries. The whole scope of the pseudo-vedas is evidently the destruction of the existing belief of the Hindus without regarding consequences or caring whether a blank be substituted for it or not. The writings of Rammohun Roy seem to be precisely of the same tendency as the discussions of Robertus de Nobilibus. The mission of Madura appears to have been founded on the principle of concealing from the natives the country of the missionaries, and imposing them on the people as belonging to the sacred tribe of the Brahmins (Romaca Brahmana was the title they assumed) and this

deception probably led to many more.

The Calcutta Monthly Journal, which carried a report on Ellis' paper, wrote in Rammohun's defence :—

“—We cannot help observing that the author of this attack on the writings of the extraordinary and highly gifted individual alluded to, should in justice to that individual have pointed out the particular writings and passages against which he levelled his censure. According to our humble opinion, Rammohun has not been labouring to destroy the belief or religion of the Hindoos but to convince them that their saered authorities have been interpolated and misinterpreted, that a system of ceremonials and worship has been introduced and practised inconsistant with and repugnant to the precepts inculcated in the Vedanta and other holy authorities and with a view to enable his countrymen to detect the error which they have hitherto adopted, he has furnished them with genuine translations of the parts of the scriptures which inculcate not only the enlightened worship of one God but the purest principles of morality. The Pseudo-Vedas alluded to by Mr. Ellis were written, it seems, to refute the doctrines as well as to show the absurdity of the ceremonies inculcated by the Brahmins. Now, if we understand the writings of Rammohun, they are not intended to refute the doctrines which are to be found in the Hindu scriptures but to exhibit these doctrines in their genuine language and thereby to show that many of the ceremonies of the present day are neither enjoined by these doctrines or consistant with the pure system of Hindu worship, which acknowledges only one God. To this belief and to a rational system of worship, consistant with this belief, Rammohun is desirous of directing his countrymen,—we are wholly at a loss to comprehend how the writings of Rammohun can deserve the censure which they have received—” J.K Majumdar : *Raja Rammohun Roy and Progressive Movements*,

NOTES

1. When we are assessing the contribution of Sankara as a great Reformer of Hinduism we may as well keep in mind the observation that Arnold Toynbee made with reference to Hinduism, which is as follows :—

“I am going to assume that Hinduism is one of the living higher religions.....Is Hinduism a religion that has historic founders and that bases itself on beliefs? Is not Hinduism founded, all on rites and practices and are not its beliefs based on tradition rather than on revelation? The answer to this question depends no doubt on the sense in which one takes Hinduism. If one takes Hinduism as being the living Hindu religion of today and traces that back as far as one can without meeting with any break in continuity, I think one will find Hinduism rising in about the 8th or 9th century of the Christian era and not earlier than that—as a conscious reaction against Buddhism. And I think one will find that it has found us who have expressed its differences from Buddhism in intellectual terms, in terms of belief...”

Toynbee's contention that the present Hinduism, started from 8th Century A.D. is based on the belief that there has been a break of continuity of the religion (Aryanism) in India from that time. But I would suggest that there was no break in continuity from Aryanism of Vedic age upto today. The fact is that after Aryanism continued from early times upto Muslim rule, the rulers coined the term “Hinduism” by calling India “Hind” (Persian word being Hind) and gave currency to the word Hinduism.

In this connection, it may be stated that because of more confused thinking it has already got currency in our country that this word “Hindu” has been taken from “Hapta-hindu” of Avesta. Poet Tagore's views are also given below :—

“.. and the result of its (the old Dravidian culture) combination of the Aryan, which formed the Hindu civilisation, was that the latter acquired both richness and depth under the influence of its Dravidian component. Dravidians might not be introspective or metaphysical, but they were artists, and they could sing, design and construct. The transcendental thought of the Aryan, by its marriage with the emotional and creative art of the Dravidian, gave birth to an off-spring which was neither fully Aryan, nor Dravidian but Hindu.

With its Hindu civilisation, India attained the gift of being able to realise in the commonplaceness of life, the infinity of the universal. But on the other hand by reason of the mixed strain in its

blood, whenever Hinduism has failed to take its stand on the reconciliation of opposites which is of its essence, it has fallen a prey to incongruous folly and blind superstition. Note the following also:

In spite of Siva's entry amongst the Aryan Gods, his Aryan and non-Aryan aspects remained different. In the former, he is the Lord of ascetics who, having conquered desire, is rapt in the bliss of nirvana, as bare of raiment as of worldly ties. In the latter, he is terrible, clad in raw, bleeding elephant hide, intoxicated by the hemp decoction. In the former, he the replica of Buddha, and as such has captured many a Buddhist shrine; in the latter, he is the over-lord of demons, spirits and other dreadful beings, who haunt the places of the dead, and as such has appropriated to himself the worshippers of the phallus and of snakes, trees and other totems. In the former, he is worshipped in the quietude of meditation; in the latter, in frenzied orgies of self-torture" (*A Vision of Indian History* by Rabindranath Tagore).

2. Austerity should have been symbolised by simpler marks or mere posts (not by temples)
3. This ban was probably instituted after the Gupta period when hordes of invaders from Central Asia ravaged India
4. See Explanatory Note on Sankara p. 130
5. "..... Indian philosophy does, in fact, elevate power, control, or freedom to a super-eminent position above rational morality... Arjuna does not doubt that he can kill many of his kinsfolk with a flick of his wrist. The important thing is not the effect of this ability, but Arjuna's faith in it. Krishna urges him to act upon that faith but without attachment to the results .."(Karl Potter *Presuppositions of India's Philosophies*)
6. It appears that the West associates India with Advaitism and not the other systems. Surely this is because the conception of Monism is unique.
7. Prasthanatraya : (a) Sruti-Prasthan (Upanishads), (b) Nyaya-Prasthan (Vedanta) and (c) Smriti-Prasthan (Gita)
8. Both Ballabha and Chaitanya tried to propagate Gaudiya Vaishnavism in Kashi but failed, Ballabha left Kashi under a cloud. Chaitanya's message of love, which is an extension of the Vaishnava cult, is a contribution of high order. But the philosophy of Vaishnavism, as one goes deep down to its roots, is hardly edifying. One

mind is conferred by the exposition of the concept of Jiva and Brohmo in Vaishnavism as well as Gaudiya Vaishnavism.

9. In the six systems of Hindu philosophy, rationality has been copiously mentioned and used. And also, Buddha strongly emphasised it in many crucial discussions.

Rammohun's Religious Beliefs

SOME important authors and learned men state it seriously that according to the Hindu *Sastras*, asceticism is the only way to attain Brohmo realisation and that householder's life is a bar to this. Such a view has no roots and cannot be supported because it is well known that there were many householders in ancient times who as householders achieved Brohmo realisation like Yajnavalkya, Vasistha, Srikrishna, etc. An illustrious case is that of Yajnavalkya, who occupies a unique position in the Upanishads. He was not only a householder but had two wives and his name was associated with one big Upanishad in which he took a large part through philosophical discourses (*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*)¹ whose influence is visible even today. His greatest work *Yajnavalkya-Sruti* has, from the most ancient times, been a beacon light to the Hindus aspiring to Brohmo realisation. This *Sruti* contains serious and elaborate discussions attempting to solve the mysteries of the universe, life and death. *Yajnavalkya Smriti* discusses social matters and gives directions to householders. Another towering personality in social importance and popularity and the greatest of all commentators and law-givers, **Manu**, was also a householder. His immortal work *Manusamhita* (*Manava-dharma-sastra*) still governs the Hindu mind and though not in strict accordance with the life now it still commands the highest intellectual admiration for the

vastness of his vision and comprehension. Times have changed, yet even today it is not altogether outmoded if we ignore the few perverse injunctions which crept into the *Samhita* under peculiar circumstances which defy all explanations and justifications of modern times. Despite all said against it, *Manu-samhita* remains the stupendous creation of a great mind and its historical value is immeasurable. Another case in point is Rajarshi Janak, who also achieved Brohmo realisation. Janak's eminence spread far and wide, and even the consummate yogis used to come to him for discussion, guidance and enlightenment in many difficult problems. Uddalak Aruni, a householder, gave a discourse on the full significance of *Tat-tvam-asi* to his son Swetaketu. The immortal Vasistha, Viswamitra, Yajnavalkya, Srikrishna, Janak and many others being householders whose Brohmo realisation is unquestioned, one would be foolhardy to say that a householder's life is a bar. One is led to realise the importance of *Chaturasram* (four stages of life through which a householder had to pass in ancient society) which trained him and made him fully competent to realise the Supreme Brohmo. Some of these householders not only achieved high eminence but also left scriptural *bhashyas* (commentaries) for the benefit of the generations to come. Thus it will be clear that some householders, over and above their own Brohmo realisation, occupied a pre-eminent position, as the educators of Brohmo realisation, far more than the ascetics who renounced the world early in their life. As a matter of fact, it would be difficult to name many Vedic rishis who were ascetics.

In this respect, it is equally incumbent to mention that contribution has not been any-the-less outstanding from ascetics taking to renunciation, like the genius-scholar Sankaracharya who, in a way, rediscovered *Vedanta* from masses of scriptural texts of ages. For our purposes, it was Sankara who placed before us the highest truths as enunciated in *sutra* form by Badarayana and embodied in the *Vedanta*.

Vedanta

Vedanta teaches that Brohmo (the ultimate reality

behind the phenomenal Universe) is beyond and without attributes. Thus Brohmo is all consciousness, Brohmo is all existence, Brohmo is all pervasive and there is nothing else anywhere but Brohmo; all else is appearance and unreality.

Since there are no attributes," cultism is excluded from *Vedanta*-conception. It will not be fully true to say that attributes have not been mentioned in the highest Hindu scriptures, in other words, *saguna*-worship has been allowed for people of the lowest strata of society who are unable to worship the Supreme Being in any other way. But this must be admitted that once *saguna*-worship is allowed, as the embodiment of different attributes, forms get set in the mind and so cultism becomes clear and takes control of man.

The true Vedantic position is aptly summarised by Deussen as given below :

"The fundamental idea of the *Vedanta* system, as most tersely expressed in the words of the *Veda*, "That Art Thou" (*Tat Tvam Asi*) and "I am Brahma" (*Aham Brahma Asmi*), signifying fully the identity of Brahman and the Soul. This means that Brahman, that is, the eternal principle of all beings, the power which creates all worlds, sustains them and again absorbs them is identical with the *Atman*, the self, or the soul; namely, with that in us which when we judge rightly, we acknowledge as our own self as our inner and true essence. This soul in each one of us is not a part of Brahman as emanation from him, but it is fully and entirely, the eternal indivisible Brahman itself."

Vedanta is concerned only with the objective stated above and the method one adopts to reach it is immaterial. He can try to gain his objective by doing all worldly activities and duties and yet remain unattached to the world and fixed to the objective, or by renouncing the world, provided the highest truth is sought, to have it then revealed to him. Any group or sect formed will restrict the full vision.

This discussion has to take full notice of *Chaturasram* as

enjoined upon the Hindus in the olden times. At that time when society was regulated by strict rules and practices, *Chaturasram* was the prevailing order of society about which no doubts arose in the minds of men. Of the four stages, the first was a preparation (*Brahmacharyya*) under a Guru, the second was the life as a householder (*Garhasthya*), the third was the life of seclusion (*Vanaprastha*) and fourth was the life of meditation (*Sanyas*). There is no doubt that this scheme was very logical and effective particularly when social acceptance of such system was normal and automatic.

This scheme was able to provide all-round discipline, education and experiences and the enjoyment of life, the sum total of which could make possible a rich and un-interrupted meditation in the *Sanyas* stage. The scheme made life pass through good and bad, charity and adversity, joy and sorrow, success and failure, and thus helped to give varied experiences, which, in turn, tended to give distinctiveness and vigour to one's own *upasana*. A householder could therefore have ultimate detachment more easily from social bondage and could then advance to self-realisation. Rammohun thus found sufficient justification to feel that without a householder's life, a man's actual fund of experience would be poor, and this is why he rejected the idea of asceticism as a *sine qua non* of Brahmo realisation. If society had accepted *Chaturasram* as a firmly established social arrangement, how could it be held that the life of the ascetic was loftier or more competent than that of a householder for attaining the highest goal? This question gets special support from the oft-quoted story that Woobhoy-Bharati (wife of Mandanmisra, who was the last opponent of Sankara) cornered Sankara³ by challenging him and exposing his lack of a knowledge of *Kama-Sastra*. This anecdote may have no sastric basis, but all the same, it is widely believed in the Hindu society in which we live. The basis is therefore *chaturasram dharma*, in which asceticism was the last stage, the others being equally important for attaining perfect calm and completeness in life.

Sankara and Rammohun

Having cleared the ground in the light of our study and understanding, we find ourselves in safe company with Rammohun, who declared in his *Isopanishad-bhashya* that a householder is fully competent to attain Brohmo realisation, provided he keeps free from attachments. (see Appendix IV). If, however, it is accepted on the strength of texts that asceticism⁴ alone leads to Brohmo realisation, this becomes a very important point of deviation for Rammohun from Sankara's philosophy. Both Sankara and Rammohun were *advaitins*, and if we rely on any sastric text in support of the restrictive interpretation on the essentiality of asceticism for Brohmo realisation, Rammohun can also get Upanishadic support, probably a higher order of support, for the equal importance of the householder's life. Rammohun's first deviation and contribution would be his adherence to such a householder's life. His second deviation would be his full acceptance of social responsibility. Sankara and Rammohun stood, in practical life, on the same austerity in social conduct but one, for man's spiritual elevation and the other, for man's all-round unfolding in the midst of society. Sankara renounced society very early in life prompted by an inner call. He lived a very short life but left even then a large legacy (next only to Veda-Vyas) for India. He travelled the length and breadth of India preaching Advaitism and thus his contribution was unique. Rammohun dedicated his life to society for the social, religious and moral uplift of the people, got fully immersed in duties to his fellow men and to the world in general, but not forgetting his own spiritual elevation. These are the two stands of two men but let it not be forgotten that Sankara was supposed to be an incarnation and Rammohun was only a man.

Upasana

Upasana has a very respectable lineage and there is an elaborate reference to it in the *Mundakopanishad*. The *Chhandāgya Upanishad* also often refers to it. As a matter of fact, all Upanishads make such references in a small or large measure. Rammohun's *Vedantasara* has stressed many referen-

ces of Upasana on the lines of Isa, Keno, etc. It has been observed that some writers and critics have stated that "Upasana is untenable in Advaitism". It is not true in the case of upanishadic Upasana — it is only true of Upasana as practised ordinarily which is nothing more than a prayer. Upasana without any element of attachment for worldly interests is the Upasana meant in the Upanishads for Advaitic approach. So long as attachment remains in any form, Upasana has no significance.

So long as attachment exists, Upasana⁵ is only a prayer for a clean and healthy life and for a householder, it has great efficacy. It may lead to better life when prayer is intensified. To this personal Upasana, Rammohun introduced, for the first time, among the Hindus, congregational Upasana. This is a distinct improvement as allowing preparation in search of larger life. This congregational Upasana must have originated in Rammohun's mind from the Christian and Muslim modes of prayer.

The question now is how far *saguna* Brohmo worship has the dynamism, if at all, to lead to the ideal of *nirguna* Brohmo level or can *saguna*-worship be of such a nature that it can ever reach the nodal point and elevate itself to the level of *nirguna*-worship? Such metabolism is not possible.

Dhyan

With *chittasuddhi*, should be combined Upanishadic Upasana to attain to the highest stage "Dhyan" of *nirguna* Brohmo so as to reach the highest goal—complete absorption and eternal bliss. Upasana, as is usually practised, of *saguna* Brohmo (not *shākār* i.e. form by any means) is meaningful only to a degree.

In Sankara's Advaitism, Brohmo is *nirguna* (attributeless), *nirakara* (formless), *nirbikalpa* (one without a second) and hence "*neti-dharmi*"⁶, in other words, innumerable "not this", "not this", will never bring any finality because Brohmo is beyond identification or to be precise, beyond description. This is a very complex concept particularly with

those who do *Upasana* on a lower base. But those who do *dhyān* on a higher base (base of oneness), the thought-process takes a different turn altogether. Sankara belongs to this category—Rammohun too with certain limitations.

Our above position is corroborated by the fact that Rammohun used to emphasise the part of the *Bṛihadaranyaka Upanishad*, which says : “he who thinks that God invoked is distinct and the worshipper is distinct, does not know Brohmo at all”. It is meditation on Brohmo which only can achieve oneness with Brohmo by annihilating hindrances. What are the hindrances and why they are there, are a subject for which *Jñān-marg*, is the path of comprehension. Leaving the intricacies of *Jñān-marg*, it will suffice to say here that the *advaitin*, while working towards oneness with Brohmo, cannot evade or escape the workings of the mind (for this matter, mind may be regarded as the sixth sense and higher than the other senses. For details see Appendix V). Mind ordinarily works pell-mell bringing innumerable commissions and obsessions that obstruct the realisation of oneness. That very mind, the *advaitin* knows, is essentially capable, under the strictest control, of resolving problems by removing impediments to the realisation of the Supreme Being. Hence he takes and works up meditation by which process he tries to remove all fissiparous ramblings of the mind that seriously militate against restoring oneness. (see Appendix VI). Vedantic meditation will set at naught all the forces of obstructions that block the way of oneness with Brohmo. Once the fusion of *Jiva* and Brohmo is achieved, what is left is all void .. the world is merely an illusion or *maya*. In the preparatory moments of meditation, the world begins to vanish in complete blankness. The entire process of the realisation is through intellect and by spiritual intensity (*dhyān*) which makes the process easier. It should remain clear that *dhyān* is a stage and bliss is also in stage but the final bliss is realisation of Brohmo. It is here that the supreme position of *advaitism* is established. As a concept, it is more than difficult to attain, but what Sankara could achieve by *Jñān-marg* and by spiritual fervour, lesser mortals might not. (see Appendix III).

Sankara had his vision fixed high and his austerity was

of the ascetic order, and he took little interest in the world around him. His ideal was renunciation of the world and meditation in its highest form. If from this, it is inferred that Sankara took hardly any interest in man's spiritual uplift, this would be far from true. He did place before man a spiritual vision as will be clear from his writings. Sankara's asceticism was not such as would take no notice of Hindu society's conservation. He was conscious that Hindu society needed a strong embankment against any future flood of Buddhism which some centuries ago had shaken the entire fabric of Hinduism and brought into society a large-scale spiritual erosion. He, however, knew that his main duty was to establish Advaitism in the land and hence he travelled over the whole country preaching Advaitism more than orthodox Hinduism. It was certainly a time when orthodoxy was order of the day. It is most probable that in the course of country-wide travels, Sankara marked four points (now appear as four *muths* in four corners) as the limits beyond which brahmins with yagnic duties were forbidden. But his orthodoxy, enjoined upon priests a thousand years ago, appears to us not worth noticing when compared with far more virulent forms of orthodoxy continuing even now in the land of the philosopher critic Radhakrishnan.

Our philosopher critic has not rated Sankara as high in social matters as in spiritual matters because of Sankara's indifference to taking corrective steps. This criticism of Sankara, it is a pity, does not show any appreciation of the social and political condition of Hindu society 1200 years ago. It also forgets that Sankara was bound by traditional law and that reform of society was the duty of the king, not that of a religious and spiritual teacher, far less, of an ascetic whose thoughts were soaring above in search of eternal truths. The fact is that Sankara's philosophy of Advaitism ending in asceticism did not permit him to dabble in non-religious matters or to get involved in secular affairs.

Regarding Sankara's ascetic life based on renunciation, it was essentially his personal conviction; to see in it Vedantic motivation would not be appropriate. One may strongly

suspect that Buddha's renunciation and non-acceptance of the ritualistic life of Hinduism brought him (Sankara) under some suspicion that he was a "Prachhanna Bauddha"; as a matter of fact, Buddha took both renunciation and *Ahimsa* from Hinduism, the special stress on *Ahimsa* from Jainism (it being older than Buddhism). In the Hindu conception, too much stress on *Ahimsa* was untenable. Buddha used to set his face much against metaphysical discussions. As a matter of fact, dispassionately speaking, Buddha accepted almost everything of Hinduism in slightly modified terms, e.g. *Sunnyavad* (*Maya*), and *Nirvana* (*Moksha*) without the sacrificial rites etc. (offerings by killing).

Ramanuja—Visistadvaitism

On the one side is Sankara's philosophy of renunciation and *Jnan-marg* (knowledge of Brohmo), and on the other side, is the philosophy of Ramanuja based on the modified doctrine that the world is a reality and the householder's life is part of a grand design, *bhakti* being the key-stone in the edifice of Visistadvaitism. Intense devotion or *bhakti* has a cohesive force and a galvanising power. It should be noted here that *Jnan* plays but a minor part in bringing about complete union with Brohmo in the second case. Whereas in the first case, *Jnan* is the predominant factor, it plays a much smaller role in the second. In Advaitism, austerity and abstraction are the concomitants of intellectual understanding, as complete surrender and final merger are in Visistadvaitism. The driving force is *bhakti*, which may more easily bring about the desired fusion of individual souls with the supreme soul. Advaitism, however, maintains that this fusion is of a distinctly lower order since the unfathomable mysteries of the Supreme Being require intellectual comprehension but the power of such comprehension is almost negligible in the *bhakti* cult.

Rammohun—his Advaitism

Like Sankara, Rammohun's approach was knowledge of Brohmo (*Jnan-marg*) and he did not accept asceticism in any form—he believed in service to humanity—to make it concrete

he felt it was the clear duty of householder to help mankind to educate itself morally and spiritually for understanding and comprehending the Supreme Being. A Vedantist would do this as the ideal, provided that during the term of world-enjoyment, he should be fully detached from any worldly tie. Rammohun felt it his duty to take up all responsibilities of the society and the world around him, following the path of *Jnan-marg*. He rejected renunciation as he felt the call of humanity. Here he deviated from Sankara but with full understanding of his mission. He faced all opposition from different layers of the society until he found a small group of men willing to see his point of view and his ideals and give their humble services. He set his face against Bhakti movement in any shape since it gave form to the formless and measure to the immeasurable.

The Advaita-spirit in Rammohun was so intense that it became a part of his nature as will be evident from the songs which were his spontaneous outpourings ^{6A} The poems typify the nature of his contemplation of the attributeless Divine. This attitude is in sharp contrast to the cravings for divine grace to make earthly life cleaner and sweeter and also to the desire to do prayers for indulgences and forgiveness for omissions and commissions in life. The poems emanated admittedly from the inmost recesses of the heart, but all the same, they were cravings and prayers, though not for the annihilation of desires, which alone could give real and lasting peace to the soul. The Vedantic upasana in the final stage of meditation (dhyan) sheds everything, even bliss, and it then completes the fusion with Brohmo.

Where the devotee has not reached a high level, he may invoke Brohmo with attributes, but certainly there is no question of worshipping Brohmo with a form, which is the practice of idolators.⁷ Rammohun was a merciless critic of idolatrous practices⁸ which he condemned as unworthy of educated men or even of those who have common intelligence. He not only thought idol worship most irrational but also showed from the scriptures of the Hindus that idolatry was essentially opposed to the refined thoughts and injunctions of the Upanishads in

their totality. This is not to say that there is no mention or qualified sanction in the *sastras* for idol worship. Idol worship is described as the last resort of people belonging to the lower strata. In the preface to the translation of *Isopanishad*, Rammohun wrote :

“It is evident that though the Vedas, Puranas and Tantras assert frequently the existence of the plurality of gods and goddesses and prescribe the modes of their worship for men of insufficient understanding, yet they have also declared in a hundred other places that the passages are to be taken merely in a figurative sense.” (*English Works of Rammohun Roy*, Part II).

Requisites for Rammohun's Upasana-Tattwa

First—Constant recitation of the highest thoughts for fusion with Brohmo.

Second—Some chosen mantra for contemplation. Rammohun adopted the following :

(a) *Om Tat Sat* (Brohmo is the only eternal truth),

(b) *Ekamebadwitiyam* (He is the one without a second),

Third—Intense contemplation (Dhyan) on the immutability of Brohmo in the midst of the ever-changing universe. (The more the seeker feels that Brohmo is the only truth the greater his detachment from worldly things, the quicker his meditation will lead him to feel “Thou art that”, “I am that”).

Rammohun's Brohmo worship

Rammohun's Brohmo worship and Brohmo realisation arose from three sources, namely, (1) *Vedantasar*, (2) *Vedanta Grantha* (translation of Vedanta) and (3) *Atmanatma Viveka*.

Vedantasar

Rammohun wrote *Vedantasar*, not sutra by sutra but by taking the essentials of the *Brohmo Sutra* and explaining them. Ramanuja also wrote *Vedantasar* in which he explained the

Brohmo Sutras.**Vedanta Grantha**

This book attempts to find out the mode of realising and perceiving the presence of Brohmo in all creation. Sankara explained the inner meanings and gave instructions for Brohmo Tattwa and Brohmopasana. Rammohun translated it.

Atmanatma Viveka

This book was written by Sankara and Rammohun translated it. Sankara did not attempt to establish in it the eternal truths by arguments or by explanations. He only described the nature of *Brohmo-Tattwa* or *Atma-Tattwa* (self) and *Anatma-Tattwa* (non-self); in other words, what were eternal truths and what were ephemeral. It will be seen that different Upanishads have emphasised different epithets signifying the same Brohmo :

Satyam, Jnana-anantam—(in Taittiriya Upanishad).

Ekamebadwitiyam - (in Chhandyogya Upanishad).

Anantam Brohmo—(in Brihadaranyaka Upanishad).

Ashabdam, Ashparsham, Arupam, Abyayam—(in Katha-Upanishad).

From these and other scriptures came his realisation that Brohmo could not be perceived by human senses, i.e., *Rupa*, *Rasa*, *Gandha*, *Sabda*, *Sparsha*. From them came the realisation that Brohmo was one whom no vision could approach, no language could describe, no intellect could determine—He was beyond comprehension. Also came the realisation that He was unchangeable, eternal, without beginning or end, that all had the touch of Brohmo, because all were enveloped by Brohmo, that soul was not liable to birth or to death, that He was perceptible only by intellect.

Rammohun's Mantra

Rammohun's intimate perception of Brohmo led him to compose a mantra which he added at the end of his

Vedantasar. The mantra ran : Etam anandamayam atmanan: anubidhya, na/jayate, na/mriyate, na/hrashate, na/ bardhate.⁹

From the foregoing, it will be seen that a true believer in Advaitism like Rammohun, had no difficulty in feeling that the world was an illusion—for him the world existed for day-to-day living in service, devotion and human uplift. When the true realisation comes that everything is enveloped by Brohmo, then naturally and logically the world has no separate existence; the advaitin does not see two.¹⁰ Poet-philosopher Tagore¹¹ had the same views when in meditation. Only as a lover and devotee of nature was he a dualist in his poetic inspiration [See Appendix VII]

For Rammohun, all that the senses feel is a world, no doubt, with joys and sorrows, jubilations and disappointments but all to be taken in a Vedantic spirit of detachment and indifference. Such a man will continue to enjoy the fruits of honest service, clean mind, deep devotion and true understanding of the ultimate aim of life.

Maya (Illusion)

Rammohun had the inner perception and wrote in the *Samachar Darpan* :

“The visible world is created by His power is Maya, and that Maya is opposed to a true knowledge of God (i.e. after the acquisition of knowledge of God, the effect of Maya, which is the universe, no longer continues to appear a real existence, in the same manner as when a piece of rope is mistaken for a snake, the misconceived existence of the snake is destroyed by a knowledge of the real existence of the rope.”

Again he wrote :

“Maya is the creating power of the eternal God and consequently it is declared by the *Vedanta* to be eternal. Maya has no separate existence; it is the power of God and is

known by its effect, as heat is the power of fire and has as no separate existence, yet is known from its effects.....”

He wrote further :

“...the world, as the *Vedanta* says, is the effect of Maya and is material but God is mere spirit, whose particular influences being shed upon certain material objects are called souls in the same manner as the reflections of the Sun are seen on water placed in various vessels. As these reflections of the Sun seem to be moved by the motion in the Sun, so souls, being, as it were, the reflections of the Supreme on matter, seem to be affected by the circumstances that influence matter, without God being affected by such circumstances. As some reflections are bright from the purity of the water on which they are cast, while others seem obscure owing to its foulness so some souls are more pure from the purity of the matter with which they are connected. While others are dull owing to the dullness of matters.”

Rammohun also wrote :

“The term Maya implies, primarily, the power of creation and secondarily, its effect, which is the Universe.....”

As one reads *Isopanishad* and goes deep into the inner meaning of the first and second slokas, he will be keenly touched by the grand conception that everything in the Universe is covered by Brohmo. Apart from metaphysical thoughts, one physical fact is incontrovertible, that is that nothing is permanent (in some cases, change is discernible and in other cases, change takes place continuously and is invisible) or nothing is real or permanent in the Universe. Against everything impermanent, there must be something permanent in relation to which we call all things impermanent or unreal or transitory. Brohmo is that “Immutable”. Once this conception is accepted as logical, the conclusion is inevitable that Brohmo alone is

eternal and everything else that we see around us changing every moment perceptibly or imperceptibly, is hence illusory.

In Advaitism, there is no 'creation' in the ultimate sense. It has been stated before that Brohmo is actionless and the Universe is only an appearance. The things observed in the Universe are not real..... they are Maya.... this Maya again is not real and hence it cannot be related to Brohmo, the only reality. In the preface to the *Isopanishad* we find the following :

“The fact is, that the Vedanta by declaring that God is everywhere, and everything is in God, means that nothing is absent from God, and nothing bears real existence except by the volition of God, whose existence is the sole support of the conceived existence of the universe, which is acted upon by him in the same manner as a human body is by a soul. But God is at the same time quite different from what we see or feel.”

It is thus that the conceptual mind is incomprehensible in the ordinary way—it is comprehensible only when an object is specified—at once bringing a sense of separatism from the “One” which is permanent and real.

It has been stated that advaitism completely possessed Rammohun as a result of which it was fully reflected in his poems and songs. For elsewhere, we find :

“The Supreme Being has by his sole intention created the Universe.”

This use (of the word Creator) Rammohun made because such use has been made by his predecessors knowing well that it was only a “mayic-creation”. Once it is understood that the creation above referred to (Brohmo who is attributeless) is the totality of mayic sense, all the phenomenal world has to be understood in this light and yet this world is the place for man's service to all subjects with utmost detachment and piety. This detachment has been amply stressed in Bhagvat-Gita for it is this which may open up a new vision in man's approach to highest bliss.

The above will show very clearly that a follower of advaitism who is also a house-holder should have no difficulty in feeling that the world, though in philosophical analysis, an illusion, still exists for him for day-to-day living in social service and human uplift. Strictly speaking, the advaitin does not see two nor say "it is this it is that." If without worldly attachment, he can serve humanity and keep the divine spirit fully alive in him, then, he has fulfilled all the conditions of advaitism.

Having assimilated the main teachings of the Upanishads, Vedanta, Rammohun clearly demonstrated in his writings all that he had absorbed. From the vast upanishadic literature full of penetrating thoughts, experiences of seers, philosophical discussions on subjects like immortality of the soul and exposition of the nature of Atman etc., Rammohun came out with the ultimate message taken from the Upanishads "Know Thyself", "I am He".¹²

Tantra

It may be pointed out that though in a way it is largely correct to say that *upasana* is essentially the same in Tantra as in Vedanta still, in the outward form, tantric practice is somewhat different from the Vedic form. Upasana apart, the stress on Tantra can be well differentiated in the light of what the great Tantra expert Arthur Avalon (Justice Woodroffe of Calcutta High Court), has written :

"Briefly and simply speaking, Vedanta is the sadhana of the Purusha and Tantra is the sadhana of Prakriti. But the aim of both the systems of Yoga is the attainment of the indivisible eternal Satchidananda. Vedanta has laid stress on the inactive Purusha aspect of Satchidananda, while Tantra has devoted more attention to the dynamic Prakriti aspect." (*Garden of Letters*.)

Tantra and Yoga Practice

Since Tantra is so strongly influenced by Prakriti, certain aspects of it are naturally different from Vedanta. Here

its emphasis on Prakriti has tilted towards Yoga practice. It emphasises the physical potentialities and thus develops that side to the neglect of the intellectual (metaphysical) side whose compensation, one may rightly say, lies in Vedanta.

Tantra is dominated by two sections of ideas and injunctions, though these are not clearly separated in the Tantra books extant. The sections are *Jnan Kanda* and *Karma Kanda*. The first embraces Tantra philosophy, which is very much akin to Vedanta and contains some metaphysics in respect of God and man. It is the path of knowledge which brings the highest bliss to man, if simultaneously man's inner power also is developed. *Karma Kanda* which is essentially Tantric Yoga practice, is not only based on Patanjali's *Yoga Sastra* but goes much further. It seeks to utilise the vast hidden power of man, and its method is intense penetration into the layers of existence. It then goes to the extreme by stressing yoga to Kundalini, which, according to Tantra, is the reserve power of man stored up at the end of the spinal chord. Hence, the force here is psychic and spiritual; in Vedanta however it is knowledge, which means, to some extent, that it takes the help of Yoga of Patanjali, to lay down specific methods of concentrating on particular centres of the body, which is supposed to give a quick spurt to knowledge and power. Patanjali gives this special technique of meditation and teaches the method of supreme detachment to realise the highest possibilities of man and the mysteries of the universe.

Since Rammohun does not give an indication of any esoteric, power-generating yogic practice, in his writings, and since he has not discussed these concepts for the edification of readers we can safely take it that he accepted, for additional support, only the philosophy part of Tantra (*Jnan Kanda*) and nothing more. Since Rammohun found that Tantra echoed the high concepts of the Vedanta, he accepted to that extent the liberal injunctions, in particular of Mahanirvan Tantra and such others as were in consonance also in the other Tantras. It is therefore beyond doubt that he was not essentially influenced by Tantra's special emphasis on internal power-generation or on the special esoteric side.

It is therefore quite safe to say that the influence of Tantra on Rammohun did not turn him to a new direction or any special line of thought or practice. As Vedanta began to take deeper roots in his mind during his long stay in Kashi, his ideas about higher vedantic concept took clearer shape. He found later that Tantra, at its best, was an echo specially of advaitism in some material respects. Earlier in his life, Rammohun had been impressed by Tantra's very remarkably liberal attitude towards caste, marriage, *suttee* and other practices. On the whole, he found the main strains of Tantra running parallel with Vedantic strains — these strains, from the dawn of civilisation, giving us the highest spiritual truths such as *Mahanirvana Tantra* or other Tantras could never give. As he began to realise this, when round about his 30th year he entered the inner realm of Vedanta, he found that his intellect and his inner being acquired adequate field for fuller development.

Rammohun's Tantra Practice

It is said that Hariharananda used to perform the upasana of Brohmo according to Tantric *Kulachar*. This *Kulachar* is known by different names—Birachar or Bamachar (Bamachar being the practice of doing upasana against Nature's mode of external manifestation, all the senses of human beings are directed towards external fulfilment but Birachar's upasana stresses the reverse of the process). Rammohun it is surmised used to practise Bamachar also. Whatever form he practised, it seems certain that he was influenced in that sense, as indicated by references in *Chari Prosner Uttar* and *Pathya Pradan*.

By this time Rammohun's second long stay in Benares was over (1803), when he must have felt that the main points of deism had been absorbed by him, and that he should return to monotheism and ultimately to monism. With constant cultivation and study of the Upanishads and other scriptures, he was drawn to the main eternal query : Appearance and Reality, Self-knowledge and Divine-perception, all leading to Brohmo realisation. He read the scriptures with great devotion and concentration, and we find that he produced some of the finest

literature in the translations of the Upanishads, the Monotheistical System of the Vedas, Defence of Hindu Theism, Essentials of Vedanta and Divine Worship.

The Vedas

The Vedas are the prime scriptures (Sacred Books) for the the Hindus known then as Aryans. From this, followed other scriptures on which the Hindu mind has been nourished over the ages. They are supposed to be the oldest books governing every branch of human thinking. Veda Vyas¹³ collected all these accumulated thoughts. According to Max Muller :

“In the Vedas we watch the first unfolding of human mind as we can watch it nowhere else. Life seems simple, natural, childlike . . . While in the Vedas, we may study the childhood, we may study in Kant’s critique the perfect manhood of the Aryan mind. It has passed through many phases and every one of them has left its mark” (*Thoughts on Life and Religion* by Max Muller, p. 97)

He again said : “ . But there was an older literature in India, the Vedic and the Buddhistic, which are only now being slowly disinterred, and it is here that we can watch a real growth from the simplest beginnings to the highest concept which the human mind is capable of, it is there that we can learn what man is, by seeing once more what man has been.”

Rammohun and the Vedas (stages of Rammohun’s attachment to Vedas)

When the question arises as to what was Rammohun’s attitude to the Vedas, one has to follow it through the four stages of his life. As may be gathered from his writings, and his activities, some changes came over him from study and experience.

First stage was when in his boyhood, he believed in the

infallibility of the Vedas. In this period, he observed the traditional rituals as were being followed all around him. He was reported to have performed *Purashcharan* in devotion and in repetition. He would read *Gita* as his first duty in the morning.

Second stage began roughly when he was 12/13 years old. As he grew up he showed opposition to the prevalent rituals but fundamentally his intense belief in the Supreme Being remained unaffected. This opposition made him aloof. His relations with his family grew bitter. He left home to return after four years with high ideals about Hinduism and also Islam. At this time his study of sciences must have brought him in contact with Deism which was the prevailing faith of scientists and thinkers of the West. As a result probably the influence of the Vedas on him considerably diminished. This must have been the period during 1795-96, of Rammohun's *Tuhfat*, when rationality was his guiding force. Till then (1790) he had been mechanically guided by traditions, but now he combined his study with reason and took a total view of the scriptures. Thus his views on the Vedas suffered to the point that he was no more a blind believer in the infallibility of the Vedas.

Third stage began round about 1798-99 with an intensive study of the Upanishads. The influence of monotheism began to be prominent and deism was left behind. This was the stage when, at the cross roads, his affiliations and convictions came in for a fresh assessment. His mind was reflected in the introduction to the *Kenopanishad* :

"I have often lamented that, in our general researches into theological truth, we are subjected to the conflict of many obstacles. When we look to the traditions of ancient nations, we often find them at variance with each other; and when, discouraged by this circumstance, we appeal to reason as a surer guide, we soon find how incompetent it is alone to conduct us to the object of our pursuit. We often find that, instead of facilitating our endeavours or clearing up our perplexities, it only serves to generate a universal doubt, incompatible with principles on which our comfort and happiness mainly depend. The best method

perhaps is, neither to give ourselves up exclusively to the guidance of the one or the other; but by a proper use of the lights furnished by both endeavour to improve intellectual and moral faculties relaying on the goodness of the almighty power, which alone enables us to attain that which we seek to attain, that which we earnestly and diligently seek for."

Fourth stage began when in his maturity, he ceased to believe in the infallibility of the Vedas, as stated earlier, although he continued to have high regard for their main purpose. He accepted the Vedantic teachings, the quintessence of the Vedas :
 "... for the worship and adoration of the Eternal, Unsearchable and Immutable Being who is the author and preserver of the Universe, but not under or by any other name, designation or title peculiarly used for and applied to any other particular beings or being by any man or set of men whatsoever... ."

From the above evolutionary stages, it is clear that Ram-mohun did not adhere to his position. As he came to know more, and as he began to see the requirements of society better, he modified his views accordingly and directed his activities to draw public attention to the immediate needs of society. The Trust Deed breathes the atmosphere of unattachedness and freedom, yet it shows intense devotion to the Supreme Being according to vedantic teaching. This convinces us that he was already free from shackles of traditionalism at this stage of his life. One may go five years back (from the time of the Trust Deed) to be further strengthened in this view by what he had written in 1823 to Lord Amherst :

"Neither can much improvement arise from such speculations as the following, which are the themes suggested by the Vedanta : In what manner is the soul absorbed into the deity ? What relation does it bear to the divine essence ?..... Again, no essential benefit can be derived by the student of the *Meemāṃsa* from knowing what it is that makes the killer of a goat sinless by pronouncing certain passage of the Vedas, and what is the real nature and operative

influence of the passages of the Vedas.....

Again, the student of the *Nyaya sastra* cannot be said to have improved his mind after he has learned from it into how many ideal classes the objects in the Universe are divided and what speculative relation the soul bears to the body."

The above clearly shows that he became quite critical about the practical value of the injunctions of the Vedas in the context of a society posing modern problems to men in different walks of life. The inadequacy and inappropriateness of the scriptures to cope with the challenge of the times had been fully realised by Rammohun as early as the 1820's. This must be the reason why Kissory Chand Mitter (1822-1874) wrote in his paper on Rammohun in 1845 in the *Calcutta Review* :

"His-works on Hindu theology do not prove that he was a believer in the revelation of the Vedas, but that he aimed at engrafting a kind of universal Unitarianism on it."

All these are arguments to show, on the negative side, the futility of vedic studies individually and on the positive side the importance of a scientific education collectively.

This, of course, is no reflection on the Vedanta. Rammohun stood by it, as a philosophy and paid due attention to other parts of the Vedas which contained the various injunctions and directions and discussed innumerable topics.

Rammohun an intellectual, not a mystic

The Upanishads abound in mysticism, as they contain the experiences and thoughts of the contemplative minds of the ancient *rishis*, and Rammohun's main source of knowledge was the Upanishads. In spite of this his writings do not show mysticism. What he learnt even from mystic experience he put in plain and easily understandable language, and this is his great contribution. As we examine the influence of the Upanishads on Rammohun, we find in his writings a clear

understanding of their essentials, discarding the non-essentials. There is no trace of obscurity nor any sign of looseness of perception, as could be ordinarily expected of a religious man. Even mystic thought has been described simply. In his translation of *Kenopanishad* Rammohun describes the supreme being :

“Hence no vision can approach him, no language can describe him, no intellectual power can compass or determine him.....

He alone who has never been described by language.....

He alone whom understanding cannot comprehend.....

He alone whom no one can conceive by vision.....”

Elsewhere we find : “It is the pure unitary consciousness wherein awareness of the world and of multiplicity is completely obliterated, it is ineffable peace, it is the supreme good—it is one without a second—it is the Self.”

This description of the Upanishad is purely and simply the outcome of a mystic Hindu mind. The Upanishads¹⁴ and Vedanta have their roots in mysticism, for they are the outcome of the deepest experiences and are the concentrated expressions of seers and savants engrossed in secluded forests in thoughts on the highest problems of life and death. Some intensely sensitive *rishis* and seers had mystical experiences and those experiences were not the result of intellectual speculation but reflections of supra-intellectual feelings and perceptions. In certain cases, observations have shown that this mysticism had its origin in parapsychological power. They sometimes saw visions or heard voices (probably the outward reflection of their inner conviction) which came from within as the result of a high degree of penetrative thinking. Since some of the upanishadic thoughts and reflections were the outcome of mysticism and deep spiritual thinking, *Bhashyakars* (commentators) like Sankara, Ramanuja, Nimbarka and Madhyacharjya down to Rammohun should, of necessity, be highly spiritual but had also to be intellectual. Otherwise the writings or commentaries would be vague to the extent that mysticism could not be fathomed or brought under comprehension.

Upanishadic mysticism is the oldest in the world, dating back 3000 years. There were other mystics, among the earliest being Plotinus and the Christian mystic Eckhart in the 13th century, the Flemish mystic Ruysbroek in the 13th, and the Islamic mystics like Arabi and Bistani in the 9th century and Rumi in the 13th, while there were Buddhist mystics from the time of Buddha, especially in the grand concept of Nirvana.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

Synoptic view of Rammohun's Translations of Upanishads

(A) Mundaka Upanishads of Atharva Veda—Introduction :

“...., An attentive perusal of this as well as of the remaining books of the Vedanta will, I trust, convince every unprejudiced mind, that they, with great consistency, inculcate the unity of God; instructing men, at the same time, in the pure mode of adoring Him in spirit. It will also appear evident that the Vedas, although they tolerate idolatry as the last provision for those who are totally incapable of raising their minds to the contemplation of the invisible God of nature, yet repeatedly urge the relinquishment of the rite of idol worship, and the adoption of a purer system of religion, on the express ground that the observance of idolatrous rites can never be productive of eternal beatitude”

1st *Mundaka* - —Creation of the World :

“.. ...From His omniscience the Supreme Being resolves to create the universe. Then he created nature, the apparent cause of the world.

2nd *Mundaka*— —“He, the subject of superior knowledge, alone is true. From Him all the texts of the Vedas, consisting of verses, proceed.

.....He is immortal and without form or figure, omnipresent, pervading external and internal objects, unborn, without breath or individual mind, pure and superior to eminently

exalted nature.

.....Heaven is His head, and the sun and moon are His eyes; space is His ears, the celebrated Vedas are His speech; air is His breath, the world is His intellect, and the earth is His feet; for He is the soul of the whole universe.....

He is perceptible only by intellect.....

The Supreme Being, free from stain, devoid of figure or form, and entirely pure, the light of all lights, resides in the heart, His resplendently excellent seat; those discriminating men, who know Him as the origin of intellect and of self-consciousness, are possessed of the real notion of God."

3rd *Mundaka*— — "A wise man knowing God as perspicuously residing in all creatures, forsakes all idea of duality; being convinced that there is only one real existence, which is God. He who practises veracity prospers, and not he who speaks untruths; the way to eternal beatitude is open to him who without omission speaketh truth.

He is not perceptible by vision, nor is He describable by means of speech; neither can He be the object of any of the other organs of sense; nor can He be conceived by the help of austerities or religious rites; but a person whose mind is purified by the light of true knowledge, through incessant contemplation, perceives Him, the most pure God.

A knowledge of God, the prime object, is not acquirable from a study of the Vedas, nor through retentive memory, nor yet by continual hearing of spiritual instruction, but he who seeks to obtain knowledge of God is gifted with it, God rendering Himself conspicuous to him

No man deficient in faith or discretion can obtain a knowledge of God; nor can even he who possesses wisdom mingled with the desire of fruition, gain it; but the soul of a wise man who, through firm belief, prudence, and pure understanding, not biased by worldly desire, seeks for knowledge, will be absorbed into God

He who acquires a knowledge of the Supreme Being according to the forgoing doctrine shall inevitably be absorbed into him."

(B) Kenopanishad of Sama-Veda

".....the real spirit of the Hindu scriptures, which is but the declaration of the unity of God, tend to a great degree to correct the erroneous conceptions which have prevailed with regard to the doctrines they inculcate. It will also, I hope, tend to discriminate those parts of the Vedas which are to be interpreted allegorically.....

..... for instance, that the worship of the sun and fire, together with the whole allegorical system, was only inculcated for the sake of those whose limited understanding.....

Hence no vision can approach Him, no language can describe Him, no intellectual power can compass or determine Him. We know nothing of how the Supreme Being should be explained; He is beyond all that is within the reach of comprehension, and also beyond nature, which is above conception. Our ancient spiritual parents have thus explained Him to us."

(C) Kathopanishad of Yajur-Veda

"This work not only treats polytheism with contempt but inculcates invariably the unity of Godhead, the sole origin of individual intellect, entirely distinct from matter and its affections, and teaches also the mode of directing the mind to Him.

A great body of my countrymen, possessed of good understanding and not much fettered by prejudices of the gross errors of the puerile system of idol-worship which they were led to follow, have altered their religious conduct in a manner becoming the dignity of human beings; while the advocates of idolatry and their misguided followers, over whose opinions

prejudice and obstinacy prevail more than good sense and judgement.. ...

..... Contrary to the code of idolatry, this system defines sins as evil thoughts proceeding from the heart, quite unconnected with observances of diet and other matters of form

The soul is not liable to birth nor to death, neither does it take its origin from any other or from itself. Hence it is unborn, eternal without reduction and unchangeable; If anyone ready to kill another imagines that he can destroy his soul, and the other think that his soul shall suffer destruction, they both know nothing

.....No man can acquire a knowledge of the soul without abstaining from evil acts; without having control over the senses and the mind.

..... Rise up and awake from the sleep of ignorance; and having approached able teachers, acquire knowledge of God, the origin of the soul; for the way to knowledge of God is considered by wise men difficult as the passage over the sharp edge of a razor. The Supreme Being is not organised with the faculties of hearing, feeling, vision, taste or smell. He is unchangeable and eternal; without beginning or end; and is beyond that particle which the origin of the intellect; man knowing Him thus, is relieved from the grasp of death

.....The mind is more refined than the external senses; the prime sensitive particle is superior to the intellect; nature, the apparent cause of the universe, is again superior to that particle unaffected by matter; superior to nature is God, who is omnipresent and without material effects; by acquisition of whose knowledge man becomes extricated from ignorance and distress, and is absorbed into him after death..... no one can apprehend Him through the senses; constant direction of the intellect, free from doubts, He perspicuously appears; and those who know Him in the prescribed manner, enjoy eternal life."

(D) Isopanishad of Yajur-Veda

“The sole regulator of the Universe is but one, who is omnipresent, far surpassing our powers of comprehension; above external senses; and whose worship is the chief duty of mankind and the sole cause of eternal beatitude.

.....they (Puras and Tantras) declare the divinity of many gods and goddesses, and the modes of their worship; but.. the directions to worship any figured being are only applicable to those who are incapable of elevating their minds to the idea of an invisible Supreme Being

.....the fact is that the Vedanta, by declaring that God is everywhere, and everything is in God, means that nothing is absent from God, and nothing bears real existence except by the volition of God, whose existence is the sole support of the conceived existence of the universe.

If we look at the conduct of the ancient true believers in God, as Janaka, the celebrated prince of Mithila, Vasishtha, Sanaka, Vyasa, Sankaracharya and others whose characters as believers in one God are well known.

.....Let the authors of the Vedas, Puranas, and Tantras, it is said, assert what they may in favour of devotion to the Supreme Being, but idol worship has been practised for so many centuries that custom renders it proper to continue that worship. It is however evident to everyone possessed of commonsense that custom or fashion is quite different from divine faith; the latter proceeding from spiritual authorities and current reasoning, and the former being merely the fruit of vulgar caprice.

.....Sorrow and remorse can scarcely fail, sooner or later to be the portion of him who is conscious of having neglected opportunities of rendering benefit to his fellow creatures.

..... All the material extension in this world, whatsoever it may be, should be considered as clothed with the existence of the Supreme Spirit. (Author's translation : All visible objects are transitory and impermanent. They are covered or taken to be covered by Brohmo. Brohmo alone is permanent and

immutable. So everything has a Brohmo touch.) So keep up your Brohmo touch by detachment to everything—do not have any attachment for anything.

.....The Supreme Spirit is one and unchangeable; He proceeds more rapidly than the comprehending power of the mind; Him no external sense can apprehend, for a knowledge of Him outruns even the external sense; He, though free from motion, seems to advance, leaving behind human intellect, which strives to attain knowledge respecting Him; He being the eternal ruler, the atmosphere regulates under Him the whole system of the world.

.....He over-spreads all creatures; is merely spirit, without the form either of any minute body, or of an extended one, which is liable to impression or organisation; He is pure, perfect, omniscient, the ruler of the intellect, omnipresent, and the self-existent; He has from eternity been assigning to all creatures their respective purposes.

.....The Veda says that the Supreme Being intended to extend Himself.....

.....God is the sole object of worship, adore God alone, Know God alone.

.....Vedanta states that constant practice of devotion is necessary.....”

NOTES

1. Some Brahmanas out of Satapath-Brahman, which forms part of Sukla-Yayurveda, are called Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, and Rishi Yajnavalkya, whose philosophical discourses form a major portion is associated with it.
2. Christopher Isherwood has, in many places, taken pains to impress upon his readers that Vedanta is not opposed to cultism and that cult is not an end in itself. It is all very well to say this, for practice of cult will never allow one to rise higher anywhere near Vedantic conception. Hence the practice of worship, from the very beginning of life, should be imageless, formless, and attributeless. This little subjective practice of concentration without a form will in the end achieve the highest realisation.

Isherwood's statement that "Vedanta philosophy does not in any way condemn the cult...." takes us to the observation made by the profoundest Vedic scholar Max Muller :

"Vivekananda and the other followers of Ramakrishna ought, however, to teach their followers how to distinguish between the perfervid utterances of their teacher, Ramakrishna, an enthusiastic Bhakta (devotee) .. and the clear and dry style of the Sutras of Badarayana. However, as long as these devoted preachers keep true to the Upanishads, the Sutras, and the recognised commentaries, whether of Sankara or Ramanuja, I wish them all the success"...

Max Muller's warning was there. The inevitable has happened—the warning has not been heeded to—personality cult of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda has swept the country and Vedanta remains only in name. One does Kali worship and yet calls himself a Vedantist.

3. In the eighth century emerged the mighty intellect Sri Sankaracharya who is regarded as the greatest dialectician ever born. He brought out the meaning of the otherwise incomprehensible Brohmo Sutra of Badarayana (Krishna-dwaipayana Vedavyas). The Sutras were in the form of aphorisms, which a seer alone could divine. Sankara did give life into these which were lying enveloped in mystery and encrusted by code expressions. In a way it appears as if, the mute Vedantic fossil (Sutras) burst into life by the touch of Sankara's magic wand. Sankara had travelled as a Paribrajak all over India with his message of Advaitism. Besides he wrote commentaries on Upanishads and also Brohmo Sutra known as Sankara Bhashya. They have a unique position in the Hindu world even today.
4. This, in our close reading, leads to a position where it militates against the second sloka of Isopanishad in which provision for worldly life does exist under certain conditions (See Appendix IV).
5. Upasana in present-day society (specially Brahmo Samaj) has taken the form of prayer to God—a prayer for happiness, at best, for a moral and clean life. This is ordinary upasana.
6. Not this, not this, not that, not that (See p. 143)

6 A. See Note 14 below.

7. "Idolatry is no mere intellectual error, it carries with it evil consequences, Rammohun quoted from Kularnava Tantra in his monotheistical system. "Those who believe that the divine nature exists in any image reap only distress by their austerities."
8. "Idolatrous rites can never be productive of eternal beatitude" . (*Mundaka Upanishad* introduction). .. "and that however suitable this method might be to the refined understandings of men of learning, it had the most mischievous effect when literature and philosophy decayed, producing all those absurdities and idolatrous nations which have checked, or rather destroyed, every mark of reason and darkened every beam of understanding." (*Kenopanishad* introduction)
9. A new Mantra made by Rammohun was placed at the end of his *Vedantasar* but most adjectives have been taken from Upanishads.
10. The sense that "it is this", "it is that," etc. is the sense of separatism created by maya, because it is just created by these thoughts—this is why maya is the creator of more than one—anything, more than one, is illusion and that which has created it. is called maya. Again maya is not real—it is a means to explain, beyond it, this has no use.
11. Poet Rabindranath Tagore has expressed this Vedantic concept in many poems which are ordinarily taken either as more than abstruse or vague (as examples, poems 17 & 29 of *Balaka* may be cited).

Although Rabindranath Tagore, was a dualist as a poet (father Maharshi Debendranath was out and out a dualist, worshipping the Supreme Being as a devotee) yet as a philosopher Rabindranath was a monist with an intense feeling of advaitism. He wrote a chapter "I AM HE" in his lecture on *MAN* delivered at the Andhra University. A quotation from "I AM HE" is given below :

"In the Brhadranayaka Upanishad there is a remarkable verse; which Rabindranath rendered in English to read as follows : 'A person who worships God as exterior to himself does not know Him, he is like an animal belonging to the gods.'. This statement may rouse angry remonstrance. Should man then worship his own self ? It is possible to offer oneself in self-devotion ? Then the whole process of worship becomes a mere magnification of the ego. The truth is quite opposite, glorification of ego is the prerogative even of the animals, but it is only man who can realize "Bhuma", immensity, within his own soul as detached from his ego. It is easy to place one's God outside and worship him through traditional ceremonials..." (*MAN* by Rabindranath Tagore, published by Andhra University, p. 45)

But, what Tagore means is that Man should seek :

“The great soul who is within me, who is beyond age and death and sorrow, beyond hunger and thirst, He who is true is thought and in action, Him we must seek, Him we must know....

This seeking and knowing him is not seeking and knowing outside oneself. It is knowing through becoming, receiving through being true within.” (Rabindranath Tagore, op.cit. p. 46)

12. See note 11 above.

13. Veda Vyasa (born of Parasara and Satyawati) was the greatest of Indian theologians, philosophers and poets. He played the supreme role by compiling the Brahmo Sutra.

i) Veda Vyasa brought out the essence of accumulated thoughts of the past as embodied in the Vedas (Upanishads a part of it) in the form of Sutras which are known as Brahmo Sutra or Vedanta Sutra. He divided the Vedas into four parts.

ii) Sankara brought out commentary on Brahmo Sutra named Sariraka Mimamsa or Vedanta Darshana which are also known as Sankara Bhashyas and discussed, from beginning to end, advaitism and established it.

iii) Ramanuja followed and with the materials prepared by Sankara brought out modified monism and prepared Sri-Bhashya. He also prepared Vedantasangraha in which he collected some mantras of the Upanishads and gave their explanations.

14. The main ideas in the poems are indicated below :

That is the truth, know ye (Poem 1)

Ye Knoweth not what pervades body, hence give up pride (Poem 2)

He who provides food for the world, how dare you offer food to him. (Poem 3)

He is inexplicable, indescribable (Poem 4)

Think not of self...there is only one truth (Poem 11)

He is the supreme Soul for the entire Universe (Poem 12)

Think of the Supreme Being beyond all (Poem 13)

Know thyself...that is only (Poem 14)

Conquer maya ..lay in Brahmo (Poem 15)

Every minute man dies...how strange he forgets (Poem 20)

Think of God (Poem 21)

See God everywhere (Poem 22)

Do not forget God (Poem 23)

Practice detachment (Poem 24)

Take truth as your guide (Poem 25)

Practise detachment and depend on the eternal
truth

(Poem 26)

Give up pride...death being inevitable, know the
truth

(Poem 27)

Be good to others...know the truth

(Poem 28)

Rammohun's Polemical Writings

(*Veda-Grantha, Vedantasar and English Abridgement etc.*)

SYNOPSIS OF EVENTS (1815-1830)

IT would be observed presently that the period 1815-1820 was the time which marked the start of Rammohun's publications of his books, followed by the successive onrush of events in various walks of his life reaching to his 55th year.

First : Rammohun's academical works, *Vedanta Grantha*, *Vedantasar* and translations of the *Upanishads* appeared for the public, specially for Hindu society, so that they might be acquainted with the essentials of Hinduism. Some of his publications provoked the orthodox pundits who started pamphleteering in support of the worship of the many deities representing the different attributes of God. Rammohun answered them. This controversy lasted about four years.

Second : Rammohun continued to write books, translations, tracts (a) to give *sastric* support for the eradication of social evils such as Suttee, child-sacrifice, etc, (b) to organise congregational worship (of Brohmo) through Atmiya Sabha and Brohmo Sabha, and (c) to establish and propagate the Vedantic truth of one God.

Third : Rammohun was dragged into litigations by his

nephew Govindaprasad in 1817, with the full support of Rammohun's mother, on the plaintiff's plea that they formed a joint family. Govindaprasad also advanced the plea that Rammohun had fallen out of caste and thus attempted to deprive him of his family property. Govindaprasad claimed a share also of Rammohun's self-earned property.

Fourth : Rammohun replied (1819-1820) to the attacks on Hinduism by *Samachar Durpan* of Baptist Mission, Serampore and wrote establishing Hindu monotheism. His involvement in a polemical contest after the publication of his *Precepts of Jesus* and his subsequent rejoinders in pamphlets on *Atonement* and *Trinity*, the intellectual discussions in which he had to face not only orthodox Christians in India but also those outside, all these belonged to the period 1820-1824.

In 1820, the Wahhabi movement started in Arabia and soon penetrated into India.

In 1826, litigation against Radhaprasad ended in a verdict against the plaintiff, i.e. the Government.

Thus it will be seen that the period 1815-1828 was the most eventful and the twelve years, 1815-1826 the most productive in Rammohun's life. It was also the most difficult period of his life, when attacks on him were the severest, not only from outside which were at least intellectual attacks on behalf of Hinduism, but also attacks from inside his family, including his mother, which made him extremely unhappy. Before the litigations ended, Radhaprasad (Rammohun's eldest son) was involved in a case of mis-appropriation of Government funds. The case was decided in 1826 in Radhaprasad's favour, after a prolonged trial at the Suddar Nizamat Adalat.

During the year 1826 to 1828, Rammohun wrote pamphlets which were very important. The great event of founding Brahmo Mandir took place in 1828.

In 1830 Rammohun left for England.

Rammohun wrote the following books :

- (A) 1815 *Vedanta Grantha* (Translation of Vedanta) in Bengali,
 (B) 1815 *Vedantasar* (Vedanta's essentials) in Bengali,
 (C) 1816 (January)—The English translation of *Vedantasar*
 under the title *Translation of an Abridgement of the*
Vedanta
 1816 (June)—Translated *Kenopanishad* (Talabkar of
 Samveda),
 1816 (July)—Translated *Isopanishad* (of Yajurveda),
 1816 *Utsabananda Vidyabagisher Sahit Bichar*.

Rammohun's Tracts :
(Replies)

Tracts written by Critics
of Rammohun :

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| A Defence of Hindu Theism (1817) in reply to Sankara Sastri | (1) By Sankara Sastri <i>A Defence of Hindu Idolatry</i> (A reply from Madras to A, B, C, above) 1817, |
| A Second Defence of Monotheistical System (1817) in reply to <i>Apology of Present System...</i> | (2) Mrityunjoy Vidyalankar's (Bhattacharjee) <i>An Apology of the Present System of Hindu worship</i> (reply to A, B, C above) 1817, |
| <i>Bhattacharjer Sahit Bichar</i> (1817)—reply to tracts (2) & (3) of critics | (3) Mrityunjoy Vidyalankar's <i>Vedanta Chandrika</i> (reply to A, B, C, above) 1817, |
| <i>Goswami Sahit Bichar</i> (1820)— reply to (4) | (4) Goswami's Tract (Vaishnavite) |
| <i>Kabitakarer Sahit Bichar</i> (1820) Harachandra Roy reply to (5) | (5) Kabitakar's Tract, |
| <i>Pathya-Pradan</i> reply to (6) | (6) Kashinath <i>Tarka bagis¹ Pasanda-Piran,</i> |

- 1817 *Kathopanishad* (Bengali translation),
- 1817 *Mandyukopanishad* (Bengali translation)
- 1818 English edition of first *Tract on Suttee*,
- 1818 *Gayatrir Artha* (in Bengali),
- 1818 *Sahamaran Bishay Pravartak Nibartāker Sambad* (of Baikunth Bandopadhye),
- 1819 A debate and contest with *Subrahmanya Sastri*,
- 1819 English version of second *Tract on Suttee*,
- 1819 *Mundakopanishad* (in Bengali),
- 1819 *Atmanatmviveka of Sankaracharya* (in Bengali),
- 1819 *Sahamaran Bishay Prabhartak Nivartaker Dwitiya Sambad*,
- 1820 English version of second *Tract on Suttee*,
- 1820 *Kabitakarer Sahit Bichar* (Harachandra Roy),
- 1820 *Subramanya Sastri Sahit Bichar* (published in Sanskrit, Bengali, Hindi, English),
- 1820-21 *Bruhma Pootlik-Sambad* a Tract against the prevailing system of Hindoo Idolatry (Brajamohun Majumdar).²

From 1809, while at Rangpur, Rammohun was not only assisting Digby but was also working in the estate at Udasi. He translated five Upanishads into Bengali, then English and Hindi. Of these, the first two were *Vedanta Grantha* and *Vedantasar*, which were published in Bengali towards the second half of 1815, when he returned to Calcutta finally to settle there. Unfortunately the Hindi translations are not traceable. It appears that he could not translate the other Upanishads for want of time.

The English version of *Vedantasar*, called "Translation of an Abridgement of the Vedanta" appeared in English, not

later than January 1816.³

Following are some extracts from the *Abridgement*⁴

“.....The present is an endeavour to render an abridgement of the same into English by which I expect to prove to my European friends that the superstitious practices which deform the Hindu religion have nothing to do with the pure spirit of its

“.....I have observed that both in their writings and conversation many Europeans feel a wish to palliate and soften the features of Hindu idolatry; and are inclined to inculcate that all objects of worship are considered by their votaries as emblematical representations of the Supreme Divinity; if this were, indeed the case, I might perhaps be led into some examination of the subject, but the truth is, the Hindoos of the present day have no such views of the subject, but firmly believe in the real existence of innumerable gods and goddesses who possess, in their own departments, full and independent power; and to propitiate them, and not the true God, are temples erected and ceremonies performed. There can be no doubt, however, and it is my whole design to prove, that every rite has its derivation from the allegorical adoration of the true deity; but at the present day, all this is forgotten, and among many it is even heresy to mention it..... And, although men of uncultivated minds and even some learned individuals (but in this one point blinded by prejudice), readily choose as the object of their adoration, anything which they can always see, and which they pretend to feel; the absurdity of such conduct is not thereby in the least degree diminished.....”

“.....My constant reflections on the inconvenient, or rather injurious, rites introduced by the peculiar practice of Hindoo idolatry which, more than any other pagan worship, destroys the texture of society together with compassion for my countrymen of error; and by making them acquainted with their scriptures, enable them to contemplate with true devotion the unity and omnipresence of Nature's God.....”

".....The following texts of the Veda, viz. 'Krishna (the God of Preservation) is greater than all the celestial gods, to whom the mind should be applied.' 'We all worship Mahadeva (the God of Destruction).' 'We adore the sun,' 'I worship the most revered Varuna' (the God of the Sea)'. 'Dost thou worship me?' says the Air, who am the eternal and universal life.' Intellectual power is God. 'Which should be adored,' and Udgitha (or a certain part of the Veda) 'should be worshipped.' These as well as several other texts of the same nature are not real commands to worship the persons and things above-mentioned, but only direct those who are unfortunately incapable of adoring the invisible Supreme Being, to apply their minds to any visible thing rather than allow to remain idle....."

All these views and comments created a stir among orthodox Hindus, and several rejoinders came to Rammohun. The first was from Madras, from Sankara Sastri, Head English Master in Madras Government College, who wrote in the *Madras Courier* in 1816 controverting Rammohun's views and pleaded for the worship of divine attributes as virtual deities. Rammohun gave a well-reasoned reply in *A Defence of Hindu Theism* in which he fully defended the position he had taken and also pointed out that some of the stories and legends were not only in bad taste but also unworthy of being in the sacred books. Rammohun observed in his reply :

"Permit me in this instance to ask whether every Mussulman in Turkey and Arabia, from the highest to the lowest, every Protestant Christian at least of Europe and many followers of Kabir and Nanak, do worship God without the assistance of consecrated objects? If so, how can we suppose that the human race is not capable of adoring the Supreme Being without the puerile practice of having recourse to visible objects?

.....The learned gentleman is of the opinion that the attributes of God exist distinctly from God and he compares the relation between God and these attributes to that of a king to his ministers . . . These are obvious and dangerous consequences, resulting from the learned gentleman's doctrine, that the attributes of the Supreme Being are

distinct existences...

The second rejoinder came from Mrityunjoy Vidyalankar (Bhattacharjee), who brought out in a short time *Vedanta Chandrika* (the English version of which was called *An Apology for the Present System of Hindu Worship*). Bhattacharjee attacked Rammohun in a vituperative language but without being able to meet Rammohun's arguments.

Rammohun replied at considerable length in *A Second Defence of the Monotheistical System of the Vedas* and wrote in an injured tone :

".....As to the satire and abuse, neither my education permits any return by means of similar language nor does the system of my religion even permit a desire of unbecoming retaliation; situated as I am, I must bear them tranquilly."

It would have been less objectionable if the two Brahmin scholars, Sankar Sastri and Mrityunjoy Vidyalankar, both in the Company's employment, had written of their own accord against Rammohun's views but the case was clearly otherwise. While opposing Rammohun, they wrote against the most holy scriptures of the Hindus, which was the more painful because it went against Brahmin culture. The presumption is well grounded that these two orthodox Brahmins were acting under the direction of missionary bodies and were employed primarily for attacking their own faith.

In the second rejoinder in English to *An Apology for the Present System of Hindu Worship* of Bhattacharyya, Rammohun used equally emphatic language in the tract *A Second Defence of the Monotheistical System of Vedas*. It was followed by *Bhattacharyyar Sahit Bichar* which was his reply to the Bengali version *Vedanta Chandrika*. The fourth rejoinder was from one Goswami, who gave a sober representation of his views and Rammohun wrote his defence in *Goswami Sahit Bihar*. The fifth rejoinder came from *Kabitakar*, which too was full of invectives interspersed with pedantic Sanskrit quotations. This was not worthy of serious notice, but Rammohun replied in *Kabitakarer Sahit Bichar*. The sixth rejoinder came

from Kashinath Tarkabagis under the title *Pasanda Piran*. It also was written in a vile language, and Rammohun replied in *Pathya Pradan*.

Towards the end of 1816, when Sankar Sastri controverted Rammohun's views and Rammohun replied, Subrahmanya Shastri, a well-known and learned pandit of Madras, read Rammohun's criticism of the idol worship of the Hindus and challenged him to a debate. Rammohun took up the challenge in good spirit, and the discussion took place in the house of Beharilal Chowbey, a renowned Hindi poet. Eminent men like Radhakanta Deb and other orthodox leaders of Hindu society were present to hear the polemical contest in Sanskrit. Rammohun's contentions and criticisms could not be controverted by his opponent. The main points of the debate were later incorporated in the English tract *An Apology for the Pursuit of Final Beatitude Independently of Brahminical Observances*. This was published in 1820.

Rammohun's fight against Hindu orthodoxy started in 1815 and continued in all its vigour even till 1820 when he wrote the above tract. After that, he turned his attention to study the Bible and wrote a tract *Precepts of Jesus as a Guide to Peace and Happiness*. When it was published, the Baptist mission could not take it as an honest expression of view with no offence meant to anybody—for Rammohun the Bible, when shorn of miracles and dogmas, could become a source of happiness to men.

They took it as an unwarranted interference by a Hindu. A rude reply came from Serampur, and Rammohun started a controversy against Christian orthodoxy in 1820. It was just at this midpoint of two crusades against Hindu and Christian orthodoxy that a work entitled *A Tract against the Prevailing System of Hindu Idolatry* was published in Calcutta in 1821 under the name Brajamohan Majumdar. This tract contained arguments which were commonly used by Rammohun and was written in a simple style but with a forceful presentation of the subject matter. A study of the publication leaves no doubt in the mind of the reader that the author was none

other than Rammohun Roy. Brajamohan Majumdar, who appears as the author, was a member of the Atmiya Sabha of Rammohun and a Sanskrit scholar, but he never went beyond verbal participation in its deliberations. He was an unassuming scholar who would write hardly in a challenging manner. Containing the same arguments as advanced by Rammohun and what is specially important to note the style more or less being the same as Rammohun's the book could not have been written by him.

Prof. Stephen Hay of Chicago University quotes the *Friend of India* as below :

"It is a masterly exposure, by a native, of the absurdities of the present Hindu system. While the work is argumentative in a high degree, it is interspersed with observations which for keenness of satire would scarcely have disgraced the pen of Lucian.

What European could have written a work equally delicate and equally severe in its application, and who that has read these extracts will not say that our author, though unassisted by the advantages which we possess, has not exhibited such force of reasoning, such strength of intellect, as with them would have placed him in the foremost rank of the defenders of truth ? We appeal to those who have accompanied us through this work, whether a native equal to such a production would find himself unequal to the comprehension of Bacon or Locke or Butler or Howel ?"

Note on pseudonym

Earlier it has been stated that Rammohun adopted a pseudonym in many instances. Some of these are given below :

In 1820-21 *Bruhna Pootlik-Sambad* a Tract in the name of Brojomohun Mazumdar,

In 1823, *Humble Suggestions to his countrymen who Believe in the One True God* in the name of Prasunna Koomar Thakoor,⁵

In 1825, *Different Modes of Worship* in Sanskriti and

English in the name Shivaprasad Surma,

In 1827, *Answer of a Hindu to the Question—Why do you frequent Unitarian places of worship instead of the numerously attended established Churches?* in the name of Chandra Sekhar Dev.

This use of pseudonyms is a puzzle to many, including his great friend Adam who seemed to have failed to understand the efficacy of this procedure of educating the public. In a country where Rammohun was the only man striving for religious and social reform, he must have felt strongly that attacks on orthodoxy and suggestions for reform should come from different quarters, for that would wake up people to the gravity of the situation. Otherwise it would look as if one man was agitating, giving only the impression that he might be a crank, or that these outbursts through the medium of tracts were of a confirmed heretic and therefore not to be taken seriously. Since the issue was so important, that the basic nature of Hinduism was so sound as the highest form of monotheism, Rammohun did not like to take chances in this struggle and hence wanted to show to the people that attacks on the present position were coming from many serious-minded men, all believers in Hindu monotheism. This line of thinking for a lone reformer was not only easily understandable but also the correct one. If today we are at a loss to identify the real author (in all the instances we find the name belonging to a friend or a member of the Atmiya Sabha), it would appear that the whole weight of evidence (internal and external) has gone unnoticed. The author is undoubtedly Rammohun.

NOTES

1. It was Tarkabagis, not Tarkapanchanan as commonly used.
2. Annual Report of the Calcutta School Book Society, 1819-20 mentions Bruhma Pootlik-Sambad (Conference Between a True Believer and an Idolator) by Brojomohan Mazoomdar. This book appeared in Rev. Long's *A Descriptive Catalogue of Bengali Works* in 1855.
3. A review of the English translation appeared in the Government Gazette on February 1, 1816.
4. Deocar Schmid came to India in 1817 from London. While in London Schmid became acquainted with the *Translation of an Abridgement of the Vedanta* as published in the "Monthly Magazine" of England. The introduction to this work impressed him and after two years in Madras, he came to Calcutta, where he met Rammohun in 1819. Schmid wrote a complete translation of the Sanskrit-Bengali tract in English and it was revised by Rammohun himself.
5. After the Tytler controversy was over in 1823, a short tract : *Humble Suggestions to our Countrymen who believe in the one true God* was issued by Rammohun—under the name Prasanna Kumar Thakoor. Shortly before, appeared one tract in Bengali called *Four Questions (CHARI PRASNA)* under "Establisher of Religion" obviously an answer to Rammohun, full of insinuations and innuendos. Rammohun answered in *Chari Prasner Uttar* in the same vein at the same time.

Rammohun Harassed by Litigations

IN 1810 Ramlochan, Ramkanta's son by his third wife (Rammoni Debi) died, and Rammohun's elder brother Jugmohan died in 1811 and his wife became a suttee. Govindaprasad inherited his father's property, but it is said that he could not manage the estate efficiently and this task was taken over by Rammohun's mother Tarini Devi. Govindaprasad and Tarini Devi now combined against Rammohun. It seems that they were actuated more by personal dislike for him as a renegade than by greed for property. This dislike was because Rammohun was not only opposing the current rituals and practices of Hindu worship but was also opposing idolatry. In opposing idol-worship he began to cite scriptural texts in support which made his position stronger. Tarini Devi turned violently against him and began to devise means to stop him from proceeding further. It is said :

“that she desired the ruin of Rammohun and that there would not only be no sin, but it would be meritorious to effect his temporal ruin unless he resumed or followed the religious usages and worship of his forefathers. She had publicly declared that it would not be sinful to take away the life of a Hindu who had forsaken idolatry and ceremonies of Hindu worship.....” (See Appendix VIII)

In June 1817 Govindaprasad instituted a suit against Rammohun in the Equity Division of the Supreme Court claiming the entire property, movable and immovable, belonging to Rammohun Roy. Govindaprasad pleaded that the court should declare him entitled to a half share of joint estate on the ground that though after the partition Rammohun separated from the family and lived apart, Ramkanta, Jugmohan and to Rammohun later united and lived together as a joint family. The case continued for about two and a half years, and it was ultimately proved that they lived jointly only with respect to food but their assets and properties were completely separate. The following extract from the deposition of Bacharam Sein makes this clear :

“... from the year twelve hundred and three, in which the said partition was made, upto the year one thousand two hundred and twenty three, the said defendant Rammohun Roy and the said Juggomohun Roy and since his death the complainant Govindaprasad Roy lived together undivided as to food but that their property always continued distinct, which he, this deponent, knows from being now in the service of the complainant Govindaprasad Roy and from having seen his books, Saith that none of the sons of said Ramkaunt Roy or their descendants live together and form an undivided Hindu family.”

The case came to a close in December 1819 and Govindaprasad lost it. It is said that after losing the case, Govindaprasad saw his uncle Rammohun and admitted that it was instituted at the instigation of others, including Tarini Devi, and further expressed his apologies for the harassment caused to him (See Govinda's letter of Kartic 14, 1226 to Rammohun).

In April 1821, another case against Rammohun was instituted by Durga Debi, mother of Govindaprasad, against Rammohun in the Equity Division of the Supreme Court, claiming that as she had advanced Rs. 4500 for the purchase of two taluks, Rameswarpur and Govindapur, the two estates really belonged to her. According to her, Rammohun transferred these two taluks to her by a deed of sale executed in July

1799. He then, according to her, took these two taluks on lease for farming for a period of six years by executing a *Kabuliyat* (deed of Agreement). The Bill of Complaint included documents bearing the signature of Rammohun. She further contended, that Rammohun had executed another *Kabuliyat* in favour of her in December 1820 extending the lease for a further seven years. She contended that Rammohun neither returned the taluks to her nor paid remaining dues. This version did not tally with the contention of Govindaprasad, who in his Bill of Complaint in the earlier case, did not mention the event directly or indirectly but merely claimed half the share of these taluks as the sole heir of Jagmohun Roy. This case was filed with the full knowledge of Govindaprasad, whose signature was recorded in Durga Debi's warrant of attorney of September 1820. The documents were attested by three witnesses, none of whom appeared before the Court to give evidence. Durga Debi's complaint was therefore dismissed with costs in November 1821. These cases were cooked up largely on the basis of fake records, and they gave Rammohun much worry and expense.

The next case against Rammohun was instituted by the Raja of Burdwan, who claimed about Rs. 15000 on the basis of a bond Ramkanta had executed in respect of arrears of land revenue of about Rs. 7500. This amount became due in 1797, but the matter had been kept pending and the Burdwan Raj brought it up only in 1823. Evidently the idea was to harass Rammohun, who contended that he had not inherited any property from his father :

“Defendant had no connection with the property left by his father since he had during the latter's lifetime separated from him and the rest of the family in consequence of his altered habits of life and change of opinions and been living independently on his own earnings” (Extract from Judgement in July, 1827).

Moreover, the claim of the Burdwan Raj was time-barred being over 12 years old.

This case was followed by another, mainly against Rammohun's son Radhaprasad. Details of it have been included here with the express intention of showing what concerted action he had to encounter from a united band of shrewd and unscrupulous employees of the Courts mainly, with some Europeans belonging to the service associated with this group because of their antagonism to Rammohun as a religious reformer. His role in the writing of the *Precepts of Jesus* also played some part. Rammohun thus riddled by so many cases, (from 1817-1826) lost his vitality very considerably.

The litigations in Rammohun's life were not ordinary events; they had a special significance in as much as they bore the hallmark of the reformer's harassed and forlorn life. If his message had been less revolutionary, the litigations would have been less painful and less irksome. The case against Radhaprasad displayed all kinds of incoherence, lack of sound reasoning and of honesty on many points. It could be easily discerned that Radhaprasad was dragged into them more with a view to harass Rammohun in various ways. This attitude of opposition has to be viewed in no other way than as violent reaction to the reformer's activities. The first case brought against Rammohun by his nephew Govindaprasad (in which his nephew's and his own mother's views about Rammohun's alleged deviation from Hindu religion were focussed) hinged on :

“serious disputes and differences with Rammohun Roy on account of his religious opinions. She instigated and prevailed upon Govindaprasad Roy to institute the suit in the Supreme Court against Rammohun Roy as a measure of revenge because he (Rammohun) had refused to practise the rites and ceremonies of the Hindu religion in the manner in which she wished the same to be practised or performed. Tarini Devi, Gobindaprasad Roy and other members of her family had cut off all intercourse with Rammohun Roy on account of his religious opinions and writings. She had repeatedly declared that she desired the ruin of Rammohun, and that there would not only be no sin, but it would be meritorious to effect his

temporal ruin, unless he resumed or followed the religious usages and worship of his forefathers. She had publicly declared that it would not be sinful to take away the life of a Hindu who had forsaken idolatry and ceremonies of Hindu worship. Tarini Devi knew well that the suit in the Supreme Court would not have been instituted if Rammohun Roy had not acted in religious matters contrary to her wishes and entreaties and differently from the practices of his ancestors."

Thus it will be very clear that the basic and primary force of these litigations was simply to tarnish the good public image of Rammohun.

The second case, against Radhaprasad, is no less illustrative. We find John Digby returning to India from England after a stay of four years towards the end of 1819. On arrival he lived on an allowance till he was posted as Acting Collector of Burdwan in September 1821. He had under him an able officer, Devnarain Bose, as Head Seristadar, but Bose did not have a reputation for straightforwardness. It so happened that his assistant Nilmony resigned shortly after Digby's return, and Digby appointed Radhaprasad early in 1822 to the vacancy at the age of 21. This was the point when opposition started from a group consisting of Devnarain Bose, Deviprasad Sarkar, Shannuklal Tewari, Sivnarayan Roy, Molony, Hutchinson and Armstrong besides others. This opposition, from fear that their opportunities for all kinds of nefarious activities would decline, arose with the introduction of an outsider like Radhaprasad. Their opposition was all the stronger because Radhaprasad's father was held to be anti-Hindu and a radical social reformer.

Digby knew that there was much corruption, dishonesty and foul play in the Collectorate of Burdwan. On August 31, 1822, he examined the treasury and found the total cash short of the recorded cash balance, besides other irregularities. He therefore dismissed the Khajanchi (treasurer) Deviprasad Sarkar under orders of the Board of Revenue. On losing the post, Deviprasad requested Digby to appoint his nephew in

his place. Digby refused, and this was another very strong reason why that group turned hostile. Deviprasad got himself a post under the Raja of Burdwan, who had a strong dislike for Rammohun and his family. It is not unlikely that this was why a dismissed person like Deviprasad was taken into the Raja's service. In place of Deviprasad, Digby took Sivnarain, the son of Rajiblochan Roy, an intimate friend of Rammohun. A rumour was immediately started by interested parties that special efforts had been made by Radhaprasad to get Sivnarain appointed and that there had been ulterior motive for this action. The situation gave Raja of Burdwan occasion to utilise this opportunity with the help of Seristadar Devaraian Bose. Now started intrigues, forgeries, anonymous letters and other forms of harassment. Hardly six months after Radhaprasad joined Digby's service, three suits of bribery totalling about Rs. 450/- were brought by three relations of Deviprasad against Radhaprasad before the magistrate of Burdwan.

It was strongly rumoured that Radhaprasad had Shivnarain appointed in his own interest, but the facts were quite different, for it was Digby who took special interest in Shivnarain as will be abundantly clear from the following letter by Digby :

“With regard to the manner of his appointment, his father Rajiblochan Roy in whom, having long known him, I had reposed confidence, earnestly solicited this situation for his son, and representing him as perfectly qualified and offering to pledge his whole Estate for his son's fidelity in the discharge of his duties.”

At this time the dispute between Maharaja Tejchand of Burdwan, assisted by the Bose group, and the widowed daughter-in-law who laid a claim to a big sum of money from the Raja's Estate, aggravated. It was alleged that the second party was getting sympathy and assistance from Guruprasad Mukherjee, Rammohun's nephew, and also from Radhaprasad. Deviprasad attempted to get Digby's signature to a fraudulent transaction and Digby lost all confidence

in him. Bose submitted a long petition to the Board against Digby in April, 1823. Digby forwarded his explanation and followed this by another strong letter "suggesting to the Board the expediency of removing him (Bose) from his position and of authorising me to nominate another person in his place." The Board accepted his suggestion and Bose was removed. In his place Digby nominated Kunjbehari Roy, Seristadar of the Dewani Adalat of Zilla Ramgarh. So Kunjbehari came as Head Seristadar of Burdwan Collectorate. Sometime earlier Rammohun Majumdar had complained to Digby against Bose for taking bribe, who now turned the table by filing a criminal case against Majumdar (and included Radhaprasad for conspiracy and perjury) in the court of Hutchinson, Magistrate of Burdwan. The magistrate, already prejudiced against Radhaprasad, requested Digby to refer to the Board the result of his (Digby's) Inquiry into the charges against Bose and also requested him to start proceedings for the prosecution of Radhaprasad and Majumdar. When Digby refused, Hutchinson wrote to the Board for the same purpose. The Board pointed out that Hutchinson was adopting measures which "were extrajudicial and not required by any existing regulations." Having failed to move the Board, Bose caused one Shunnuk Tewari to submit a petition to it alleging malpractices by Radhaprasad, *Peshkar* of the Collectorate. In his petition Tewari praised Bose and complained that Radhaprasad had taken money from the treasury, and received a bribe from Sivnarain, and had further embezzled Stamp Paper. On getting the Board's letter, Digby immediately examined the treasury and found everything intact. This was in June 1823. In the midst of multifarious work and because of ill health, Digby overlooked sending all the relevant papers to the Board. But he pointed out that Tewari's signature looked a forgery (by Bose). All these were sufficient indications that Bose was the source of the accusations in the petition. Digby also pointed out that the charge against Radhaprasad was baseless (J.K. Majumdar : *Raja Rammohun Roy and Progressive Movements* Vol I pp. 423-25) Radhaprasad's innocence was supported by Molony's statement :

"Such are Seebnarain's accusations against Radhaprasad,

the latter denies in toto, stated that he had nothing to do with Seebnarain, who is the person who had really embezzled the money, and that he never got him his appointment, which was made entirely by Mr. Digby, who persisted in it, and who thereby became responsible for his conduct, that he Radhaprasad is neither head Sheristadar, or Treasurer, and therefore not at all liable for matters of this sort". (J.K. Majumdar op.cit. p. 358).

Further, Digby cited several instances of collusion between the Raja of Burdwan and Bose. Bose being thrown out of the employment of the court, the Raja largely lost his influence in the collectorate. But Bose was a man who would not accept a defeat easily and hit upon a new plan. He knew full well that Radhaprasad was not the culprit, but he planned to implicate Radhaprasad with a framed-up statement from Sivnarain that Sivnarain was too young to understand what he was doing to help Radhaprasad to embezzle. After making this statement, Sivnarain surrendered himself before Hutchinson. The Magistrate summoned Radhaprasad, but what Radhaprasad produced staggered him and everybody else. Digby's letter to the Board of Revenue dated July 27, 1824, stated :

"Sherestadar (Radhaprasad) showed a letter he has received from Treasurer's (Sivnarain) father (Rajiblochan) on 25th instant requesting that the sums which had been made use of by his son and Ramdhan Chatterjee without Sherestadar's knowledge might be refunded in the course of two months... Proceedings held by me on the subject were that the Treasurer should be immediately suspended from his situation and delivered over to the Magistrate" J.K. Majumdar op.cit. p. 350).

Digby suspended Sivnarain and handed him over to the Magistrate (July 1824) and Radhaprasad tendered his resignation, which Digby accepted. Digby was seriously ill and he left on long leave and Armstrong came in his place. Molony (Remembrancer of Legal Affairs) was appointed Commissioner to inquire into the embezzlement. In their

reports Molony and Armstrong tried to incriminate Radhaprasad, first as the real culprit, Sivnarain as an accomplice, Ramdhan Chatterjee as an active accessory, with Pitambar Chatterjee the writer and Ramchandra Ganguly the Record-Keeper. From these developments, emerged (1) that all the European masters protected, defended and pleaded for the reinstatement of Devnarain Bose, the chief intriguer, (2) that these Europeans suppressed the statement of Rajiblochan Roy who accepted his son's guilt in embezzling money from the Burdwan Treasury without the knowledge of Radhaprasad and also agreed to make good the deficiency, and (3) that Molony interpolated two fresh charges against Radhaprasad and represented them as Sivnarain's accusations. After an inquiry, Molony sent four persons to the Magistrate for trial—Radhaprasad, Ramdhan, Ramchandra and Pitamber. This action not only kept Radhaprasad in detention but also put Rammohun to further troubles and harassment. These four accused came under all kinds of harsh treatment and it was surprising that those whose corruption and dishonesty were already established received far less punishment. The case of Radhaprasad was ultimately referred to the Sadar Nizamat Adalat and after encountering years of hardship and trouble, Radhaprasad emerged fully acquitted with a unanimous verdict of 'not guilty'. The case was unnecessarily prolonged and was made unnecessarily complicated evidently to harass not only Radhaprasad but more so Rammohun. This was because there was a conspiracy of some cunning Indians and Europeans both carrying grudge against Rammohun as a reformer of Hinduism and a critic of Christianity.

Rammohun in anguish

Rammohun now reverted to his other work relating to social and religious matters, for, it is clear that he got very much depressed by all kinds of false and fabricated charges against Radhaprasad. In 1826 when all litigations against Radhaprasad came to a close, Rammohun needed peace to solace his lacerated heart and relieve his deep anguish at the depraved condition of society which he had seen during the last few years of litigations. He now turned to writing religious-cum-

literary tracts. In 1827, he published *Gayatri Paramopasana Vidhanam*, a Sanskrit-Bengali tract on the mode of worshipping the Supreme Being through the *Gayatri* mantra.

In 1828 came *Brohmopasana* a tract on the worship of the Divine. In the same year came *Brohmo-sangit*. In 1829 *Anusthan* appeared in Bengali. In it, there is a dialogue between Acharya and his Shishya (Master and disciple) about Rammohun's concept of upasana. His special interest in these topics at this time must have been due to his reactions against what he saw in society specially during the litigations; he must have moreover wanted to show from *Gayatri*, *Brahmopasana* and *Anusthan* that the original Hindu concepts had been salutary and ennobling in every way.

From these publications and his exchange of views with his friend Rev. William Adam in respect of Hindu and Christian Unitarianism and Unitarianism in general, emerged new lines in the Brahmo Samaj precepts with distinct theistic trends from 1829 (after the Samaj came into existence). These were on salutary lines for the common men and also for the deeply religious men though surely Rev. Adam and Rammohun had their different stands on Unitarianism, more in its practice than in its essence. Without this deviation, Unitarianism would have remained a pure abstraction and the result in India would have been disastrous.

Rammohun on Modern Education

As early as 1781 Warren Hastings established the Calcutta Madrassah for the study of Persian and Arabic along with Muslim theology and law. The court language then was Persian. Several years passed until in 1792 the Sanskrit College at Benares was established by the Government of Lord Cornwallis through the instrumentality of Jonathan Duncan, a highly reputed oriental scholar who was also Resident of the Government at Benares, for organising Sanskrit studies. The studies would include not only Sanskrit literature and grammar but also Hindu law, philosophy, religion and other such branches of learning. Both the Calcutta Madrassah and the Benares Sanskrit College were intended for turning out Indian civil servants to run the administration both on the executive and legal sides. After some years, it was found that while the needs of government were largely met by this arrangement, the country as a whole was scarcely benefited. In other words, this was hardly adequate to educate the common people. This situation made Lord Minto (1807-1813) unhappy and he prepared a Minute in 1811 requesting the higher authorities to take more effective measures to provide facilities for education. He also suggested that two more institutions like Benares Sanskrit College should be started at Nuddea and Tirhoot (now known as Mithila), the old centres of oriental learning. Two committees were set up to expedite matters, but nothing materialised for about ten years. In spite of Minto's urgings various

excuses were offered by the committees and no progress was made. At last in 1821, when the government under Lord Amherst was considering the question of utilising the special grant of Rs.1 Lakh, it decided to establish, with the help of Wilson and other reputed orientalists, a Sanskrit College in Calcutta of the type of that of Benares, but on a larger scale. This emphasis on oriental learning at this stage of India's educational development, provoked Rammohun to write an appeal against furthering it to the complete neglect of modern subjects specially the sciences which in his opinion should be the basis of future progress. Rammohun's appeal had no effect on the members of the general Committee of Public Instruction.

Soon after Rammohun returned to Calcutta in 1815, he started Atmiya Sabha in his own house at Manicktala, where his friends and others of his way of thinking used to meet to discuss social, educational and religious matters. He published from here his translations of the Upanishads at this time. Discussions ranged from social matters to aspects of government policies in various fields. Rammohun followed with great interest the work of Serampore missionaries and also of Fort William College which had started work almost 15 years ago. He was watching the progress of the College with all the more admiration since these young civilians were not only under-going the usual training but also doing research on India's past. He had already before him the stupendous work that Wilkins, Halhed, Colebrooke William Jones etc. had left. Now Rammohun with other members of the Atmiya Sabha sat down to explore ways and means of founding an institution to train up youngmen with proper religious education to make them the instrument for advancing Hindu Society's progress in the right direction. When Rammohun suggested a religious institution for this purpose, Dayid Hare proposed an educational institution to give training in the modern way. Rammohun agreed that such an institution could look after the furtherance of all-round general improvement by dispelling superstitions and mechanical observances and old ways of thinking and doing. Rammohun readily accepted the proposal and the Atmiya Sabha gave its approval in the course of deliberations on various other social matters.

Hindu College (School)—its genesis

Present in the Atmiya Sabha, was Baidyeenath Mukherjee who without losing time, took the first opportunity of calling upon the Chief Justice of the Calcutta Supreme Court, Sir Edward Hyde East, and acquainted him with the proposal. Sir Hyde East welcomed it and after consulting officials in government, asked Mukherjee to discuss this proposal with men of position in Calcutta. A meeting was then called at East's place early in May, 1816 and an English School (which was later named as Hindu College) was decided upon. An executive committee of distinguished Bengalees and Europeans was formed with Sir Hyde East as Chairman, but neither Rammohun nor Hare was included in it. It is said that there was strong opposition to their inclusion from the orthodox section.

The question as to who among the three—Rammohun, Hare and East—deserves the highest credit for founding the Hindu College, has long been a matter of controversy amongst researchers on the subject. For reformers and well-wishers of the country, this is a very small question, but when a historian of some eminence assumes a hostile attitude against Rammohun, the matter takes a different turn and the actual performance, intentions and devotion of these reformers must be brought to the fore. For this purpose there are two sources available to us (i) recorded statements from contemporaries, and (ii) contemporary journals.

Taking up, in the first category above, the relevant portions of East's letter to Harington written on May 18, 1816, three main things come before us : (a) "he (Baidyeenath Mukherjee) informed me that many of the leading Hindus were desirous of forming an establishment for the education of their children in a liberal manner as practised by Europeans of condition....." and desired "if I would lend them my aid...". (b) that Rammohun was not personally acquainted with him, and (c) he heard that "Rammohun was a Unitarian who was against Hindu idolatry and upbraids his countrymen pretty sharply." True, there was no mention of Rammohun being present in the meeting where establishment of a school was dis-

cussed, but sufficient indication is there from (a) above that Baidyeenath went after discussing with some leading Hindus—this, in all probability, indicates Atmiya Sabha of which both Rammohun and Baidyeenath were members. It is also clear without the slightest shred of doubt that East was asked for his aid, (he himself said this) and therefore the idea did not emanate from him. For the idea, either Rammohun or Hare or both should have the credit not East. Nobody should however miss the significant words : “in a liberal manner as practised by Europeans”, indicating Rammohun’s hand.

Here a misconception needs to be cleared. This arose because East mentioned in the letter vaguely that : “A brahmin gentleman whom I knew, called on me”. Major B.D. Basu wrongly thought that East referred to Rammohun and the historian Brajendranath Banerjee also thought so, but it should be easily seen that this referred to Baidyeenath. Rammohun did not call on him—East did not know Rammohun.

Now we may take up the second source viz. the contemporary journal *Calcutta Christian Observer*. This states David Hare as the originator of the proposal and also Rammohun as main supporter who naturally became its final approver, being the chief of the Atmiya Sabha. Here the point to be noted is that unless Rammohun approved it, the Sabha would not have accepted the proposal and Baidyeenath would not have moved in the matter.

Even if one feels that the *Calcutta Christian Observer* and Derozio probably showed a special leaning towards the contribution by a Christian (Hare), still the fact that the article was written in the life-time of Rammohun goes to prove the authenticity of the version in the *Observer*. Surely it would have carried greater weight if Rammohun had been in India when *Observer’s* version came. In any event, one fact is unchallengeable, that Hare and Rammohun were intimately connected with the proposal for an English school.

The above two stands differ only in emphasis—that of the *Calcutta Christian Observer*¹ on Rammohun and Hare, and of Brajendranath Banerjee on Rammohun. The

Observer lays the entire stress on the person who suggested the proposal first and Banerjee on his discovery of East's letter from the State records, wherein, East referred to a Brahmin gentleman (who, as already stated Banerjee hastily concluded to be Rammohun). Since Banerjee's inference is incorrect as Badyeenath was the real carrier of the proposal, the first source has to be fully depended upon. From the above it is clear that both Rammohun and Hare were intimately associated with the starting of the Hindu College.

It is absurd to say that Rammohun had nothing to do with the founding of the Hindu College. Between David Hare of hallowed memory and Rammohun, the great reformer and educationist, the question of apportionment of credit in such a matter is not only uncalled for but also ridiculous, for both these men were imbued with the highest ideal of national development. Yet it should not be forgotten that history does not end here. When in 1823 the Committee of Public Instruction publicised its report for greater emphasis on oriental education, which was in a way laying down the future policy on education in India, neither was East to be heard, nor even David Hare, Radhakanta Dev or anybody of the orthodox group which packed the Hindu School Committee nor anybody from Bombay or Madras could be heard. The only one to raise his voice against the policy of strengthening the old type of learning was Rammohun Roy. We should leave aside this petty issue which has lately created a controversy over a small point but we have to record regretfully the lack of interest of Hyde East, Radhakanta, Ramkamal and others who did not show any concern in furthering education on modern lines. Only Rammohun gave constant thought to the subject and reached certain conclusions regarding future education in India with which later educationists of high repute largely agreed. It seems clear that Rammohun's arguments moved Amherst in a large measure but the members of the Committee took them with indifference. Rammohun's arguments were clear, forceful and dignified and it was a well-reasoned appeal² against continuation of the old learning of sanskrit classics, grammar and rhetoric etc. The appeal strongly advocated introduction of science subjects of special importance like biology, medicine, technology, etc.

Amherst however, quietly and partially responded without giving much attention to the Committee's Recommendations and he agreed to bear the cost of building-construction for science-education for Hindu College. A land for the college was allotted by the side of the Sanskrit College which already had been acquired from its owner David Hare, ardent lover of education. When the building was completed, Hindu College shifted there from Bowbazar street. Thirty years later in 1855 the Hindu College was split, senior classes merging with Presidency College and the junior classes being reorganised as Hindu School.

Hindu College—Rammohun's role in founding it

It has already been stated that David Hare, Rammohun, Baidyeenath, Hyde East and other notables of Calcutta were responsible for the starting of the above institution. But historians like R.C. Majumdar, taking a peculiar stand against the enlightened reformer have started an attack on him, in all their orthodoxy. Evidently in order to prove that Rammohun did not take any leading part in starting Hindu College Majumdar has gone to the extent of writing by way of a taunt the following :

“thus the legend of the founder of Hindu College completed its cycle : First, it was Hyde East, second, Hyde East and David Hare, third David Hare and Rammohun and, last, Rammohun alone came to be regarded as the prime mover and founder of the Hindu College.”

We are not aware of the source where Rammohun alone has been described as the prime mover (of course Atmiya Sabha was the prime mover) and founder. If anybody has been given that honour in any document, it must have been because of overzealousness. Apparently the argument that Rammohun had nothing to do with the founding of the College has been based on several grounds, one being that Rammohun's name did not appear in the list of invitations that East sent out, another that his name did not appear in the list of members of the committee of management of the college. Majumdar

should not have forgotten that in the passion aroused by hostile, narrow-visioned, orthodox Hindus against Rammohun at that time, both these omissions stand easily explained. Outside the Atmiya Sabha, East played an important role as Chairman of the school and therefore credit is due to him for giving it proper direction.

Hindu College—some early details

When Hindu College (in fact, it was a school) was started in January 1817, it was located at Goranhata in the house of Gorachand Basak. The executive committee included Sir Edward Hyde East as Chairman and two secretaries; Lt. Irvine and Dewan Baidyecnath Mukherjee. Its Treasurer was the Portuguese merchant and banker Joseph Baretto. Its Head master was James Isaac de Anmelan of Chandannagore. The college was meant for the training only of Hindus in English, and no other community was allowed. To be more correct, only those Hindus were admitted who belonged to well-to-do and aristocratic families which could pay a subscription of Rs. 5,000 per student (the monthly tuition fee system did not initially exist in the school). Admission was allowed on the recommendation of the subscribers. The donations realised, amounting to about Rs. 100,000, were kept in deposit with Baretto's bank. The college expanded after some time with an extension of the science classes for which Mr. Harington, Chief Judge of the Saddar Dewani Addawlut of Calcutta, helped by inducing the British and Foreign School Society to gift a number of books and apparatus. The Goranhata house could no longer accommodate the school but when the authorities were thinking seriously of constructing a new building Baretto and Company declared itself totally insolvent. The result was that the deposit of the school was almost gone. The school condition became so bad that at least Rs. 6,000 was needed immediately to run it. Nobody amongst the well-to-do men of Calcutta came forward with the money, but David Hare, the educationist paid this sum when he was approached.

The school shifted after some time from Goranhata to

Chitpur, in Rupchand Roy's house and then to 48, Chitpur Road, the house of Ram Kamal Bosu. It was found that science teaching could not be seriously taken up for want of funds and competent teachers.

The foundation of the new premises of Hindu College was laid in 1824, and it was shifted to this building in 1826. Sweeping changes took place in the mode of admission and the system of monthly tuition fee (Rs. 5) was introduced to replace the payment of a lump sum.

Here a slight explanation : Lest a feeling grows that in this book too much is being made of Hindu College, we should like to say that we are discussing about an institution which took its birth (in 1817) about 40 years before the birth of the first University in India, Calcutta University. Besides, one should not forget the luminaries that the Hindu College nurtured and produced. Think of the great teacher D.L. Richardson who was on the staff of the Hindu college and showed brilliance to impress no less scholar than Macaulay; then came Derozio a worthy student of Richardson and who joined as a teacher in the Hindu College in 1826 and taught a host of pupils who became his followers : Radhakanta Sikdar (who located the highest peak of the Himalayas named "Everest"), Raja Dakshinaraman Mukherjee (one of the first educationists of India who was mainly responsible for founding the Canning College of Lucknow later on to become the University of Lucknow), Rev. K. M. Banerjee (a fearless man of great conviction who became Christian but later on wrote some books on Hindu scriptures), Ramgopal Ghosh (one of the greatest orators and an eminent public man who bequeathed large sums of money for public charity), Ramtanu Lahiri, Taracharan Chakravorty and Rasik Krishna Mullick (whose reputation in their respective fields was high) and Madhusudan Dutta of undying fame.

Summing up, when we look at the entire history of English education there is no doubt that Rammohun's name was left out in hostility in spite of his constructive role at the very inception of it. This being the treatment meted out to Ram-

mohun, one and a half centuries ago, one is forced to ask : Who else was the guiding spirit in the deliberations in the meetings of Atmiya Sabha ? Who else gave the closest thought to the expansion of modern education ? Who else gave continued efforts for over 15 years to introduce education on progressive lines? Who else fought single-handed against the highest authorities to encourage science education? Not even Hare, and still less the others. Who else had the courage to suggest to Amherst that less stress be given to old type specialisation in Alankar, Nyaya etc. to make room for study of Natural Sciences? Who else had the vision to make education available to the masses through their mother tongue Bengali? Who else was responsible for all-round reforms—social, educational, economic and scientific to the last day of his life? Except a small band of Rammohun's followers others were champions of the old learning which had come down from generation to generation in a mechanical way. Only Rammohun had the courage to cry halt and divert the attention of India to the requirements of the new age.

Hare School

Hare School which adjoined Hindu College, opened in 1823 after the merger of (a) Arpooli Bengali Pathsala, (b) Arpooli English School and (c) Pataldanga English School. The last two came under the Calcutta School Society in 1823, and these schools were run solely by David Hare with his financial resources.

Anglo-Hindu School (Later known as Indian Academy)

It is not known to many that immediately on return to Calcutta from Rangpur, Rammohun who had by then terminated his service-career, plunged into affairs to which he gave priority. In view of the publications of the translations and annotations of the sacred books of the Hindus, the priority in his mind was naturally education. He started a small school where English was also taught.

This was the school for Indian boys at Suripara in 1816 under the name Anglo-Hindu School. Tuition was free and

Rammohun bore the entire expenses of the school. For advanced students he arranged special classes in the garden house on Upper Circular Road under an English teacher named Morecroft for Rs. 100 a month. As far as we have been able to ascertain this school was set up before January, 1817, the time of the establishment of Hindu College. As a small English School, its precedence may be beyond doubt, for, if it had come into existence after Hindu College where his association was unwanted, all biographers would have taken the starting of this English School as a challenge or protest on the part of Rammohun, in which case this challenge would have been mentioned as an important event worthy of a full notice. Such a mention being absent in any account, it may be safe to assume that Rammohun's English School, though on much smaller scale, came earlier and it may also be mentioned that the school had elementary classes only. All the same, the idea of English School found expression in Rammohun quite early. He now made up his mind to make this small school into a bigger one and purchase the piece of land near Cornwallis Square and constructed a building on it. In 1822 Rammohun opened this school on the new premises and called it Anglo-Hindu School. This school was conducted by the Unitarian Committee and Rev. William Adam became its visitor, Sandford Arnot was a teacher and among the school students mention may be made of Debendranath Tagore and Ramaprasad Roy. There was a move by Adam to put it under a Committee consisting of members of the public but Rammohun did not accept this suggestion, evidently fearing that under such management, it might move towards orthodoxy. Rammohun introduced, in the curriculum, Joyces' Scientific dialogues on mechanics and astronomy, the first sixteen propositions of the first book of Euclid and translations into Bengali from English authors. A quotation may be appropriately given here from Brojendranath Banerjee's article in the *Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society* :

“... Mr. Yates, in a letter, dated August 1816, informs us that Rammohun had offered Eustace Carey of Serampore, a piece of ground for building a school house. The part he played in the establishment of the Hindu College has

already been described. Sometime in 1816-17, he established an English school of his own at Suripara for free instruction of Hindu boys ... Rammohun shortly afterwards was able to purchase a piece of land near Cornwallis Square for his school and began to construct a building on it ... In 1822 Rammohun opened his school in the new premises, which went by the name of Anglo-Hindu School. It was a free institution and was supported entirely by Rammohun... When Rammohun sailed for England, the charge of the school devolved on its headmaster Purna Chandra Mitra... from June 1834, the name of the school was changed to the Indian Academy ... Encouraged and supported by Rammohan Roy, Ramchandra Vidyavagis, who became the first minister of Brahmo Samaj, opened a chatuspathi, south of Cornwallis Square.... some say, it was 74, Maniktola Street and it began to teach *Vedanta* philosophy to students ... His Vedanta College was purely a seminary for training the priests and missionaries of his new creed ...” (the Journal seems to be under a wrong impression because Rammohun would never bother about priests for *Vedanta*.)

Vedanta College

Rammohun started a Vedanta college in 1826. This surprised many, except those who knew how dissatisfied he was with the mode of teaching of *Vedanta* in *Tols*. One should not conclude from this that Rammohun realised that he had been mistaken in the stand he took in his appeal to Amherst, nor should one think that he had turned against his earlier conviction that subjects suited to modern times should form the bulk of school and college education. He only wanted to demonstrate that ancient Indian literature should be read along with the European classics and with treatises on science or scientific methods, without which one could not be a useful member of a developing society but would remain mentally circumscribed within a narrow compass. Further, he thought that as *Vedanta* till then had been taught by ordinary institutions, whether private *Tols* or government colleges, with a false perspective, he would eliminate mechanical cramming and undue emphasis on topics which would not open out to more impor-

tant and significant thoughts and matters. His ideas materialised with the establishment of the College, where training was given in *Vedanta* combined with allied thoughts of the West and a kind of scientific outlook. He emphasised the study of unitarianism in the Hindu scriptures side by side Christian thoughts so that thinking on a rational basis might lead to better results. The new College was established in 1826 at Rammohun's Manicktala house, about which Adam wrote the following :

“Rammohun Roy has lately built a small but very neat and handsome college, which he calls the Vendanta College, in which a few youths are at present instructed by a very eminent Pandit, in Sanskrit literature, with a view to the propagation and defence of Hindu Unitarianism. With this institution he is also willing to connect instructions in European science and learning, and in Christian Unitarianism, provided the instructions are conveyed in Bengali or Sanskrit languages.”

The misgivings of ordinary people were unfortunate, but the whole issue should be examined from the point of view of a reformer like Rammohun. At a time, when a special grant of funds was available, Rammohun naturally wanted scientific studies and education on a new model in which Mathematics, Law, Economics, Political Science and such subjects would figure prominently. Rammohun's standpoint was that, having given preference to these studies, if Vedantic studies were added, this could well be considered a well-balanced course of education for Indians while to neglect scientific studies altogether and reinforce the same old orthodox Sanskrit course would mean, according to him, throttling the inquiring mind and progressive outlook of the people; in short, it would amount to continuance of the dark ages. It was to correct this situation that Rammohun set up the Vedanta College and introduced subjects like general philosophical and psychological studies for teaching Vedanta in a modern way keeping alert to world-thought, general scientific progress and trends. Rammohun neither underrated nor overrated Vedanta as a subject of study; he wanted to move according to the needs of the Indian society in the larger world context.⁸

Rammohun's appeal to Amherst sent through the courtesy of Rev. Heber reached him in good time. There is no record of any representation from anybody else in India who understood even slightly the significance of the time in which he was living, or what was coming in the immediate future, or what shape ought to be given to educational policy for India. Rammohun's Appeal was the only representation and it went into the hands of the General Committee of Public Instruction. The Committee, presided over by Harington, adopted the following resolution in January, 1824 :

“Under the discretion vested in the committee with respect to addressing any observation on the letter of Rammohun Roy either to himself or to government, the committee resolve that it is unnecessary to offer any remarks. The erroneous impressions entertained by the author of the letter are sufficiently adverted to in the letter from the secretary to the government; but had the views taken in the letter been less inaccurate, the committee would still conceive it entitled to no reply as it has disingenuously assumed a character to which it has no pretensions. The application to government against the cultivation of Hindu literature, and in favour of the substitution of European tuition, is made professedly on the part, and in the name of the natives of India. But it bears the signature of one individual alone, whose opinions are well known to be hostile to those entertained by almost all his countrymen. The letter of Rammohun Roy does not therefore express the opinion of any portion of the natives of India, and its assertion to that effect is a dereliction of truth, which cancels the claim of its author to respectful consideration.”

In spite of this, Amherst was inclined to Rammohun's plea for science education in Hindu College. Apart from what Harington wrote against the contention of Rammohun, two other men, Henry Prinsep and Wilson, persisted in giving education in Sanskrit and Arabic. This continued for more than seven years and Rammohun set out for England in 1830 without seeing any change in the official attitude. It was after 12 years—meanwhile Rammohun had died in 1833—that Macaulay took over as Chairman of the Committee from Harington, on

being appointed by Lord Bentinck. Macaulay found Rammohun's appeal very sound and immediately reversed the decision of the previous Committee and of the Government after submitting a very well-reasoned note recording his views. Macaulay presumably consulted Bentinck and finally laid the great emphasis that Science Education should get much larger encouragement and English should be the medium in place of Persian.⁴ Henry Prinsep wrote a strong note also against Macaulay's decision.

The Government had already started increasing the number of schools and most of the civilians had been giving all possible help in the founding of Calcutta School Book Society in 1817 and Calcutta School Society in 1819. The first was a body formed by a group of men, European and Indian, with a view to publishing suitable text-books (free from religious matters) and to organising a common fund of books for schools at a cheaper price or even free. The aim of the second organisation was to offer trained teachers. Both were sponsored mainly by the Fort William College elite, including W.B. Bayley (Chairman, Calcutta School Book Society), Holt Mackenzie (Registrar, Calcutta High Court), W. B. Macnaughten and Prinseps.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

Note 1 : Rammohun's Appeal—Educational Policy for India

To

His Excellency the Right Hon'ble William Pitt
Lord Amherst

My Lord

Humbly, reluctant as the natives of India are to obtrude upon the notice of government the sentiments they entertain on any public measure, there are circumstances when silence would be carrying this respectful feeling to culpable excess. The present rulers of India, coming from a distance of many thou-

sand miles to govern a people whose language, literature, manners, customs, and ideas are almost entirely new and strange to them, cannot easily become so intimately acquainted with their real circumstances, as the natives of the country are themselves. We would therefore be guilty of a gross dereliction of duty to ourselves, and afford our rulers just ground of complaint at our apathy, did we omit on occasions of importance like the present to supply them with such accurate information as might enable them to devise and adopt measures calculated to be beneficial to the country, and thus second by our local knowledge and experience their declared benevolent intentions for its improvement.

The establishment of a new Sangskrit school in Calcutta evinces the laudable desire of government to improve the natives of India by education, a blessing for which they must ever be grateful; and every well-wisher of the human race must be desirous that the efforts made to promote it should be guided by the most enlightened principles, so that the stream of intelligence may flow into the most useful channels.

When this seminary of learning was proposed, we understood that the Government in England had ordered a considerable sum of money to be annually devoted to the instruction of its Indian subjects. We were filled with sanguine hopes that this sum would be laid out in employing European gentlemen of talents and education to instruct the natives of India in Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, Anatomy and other useful sciences, which the nations of Europe have carried to a degree of perfection that has raised them above the inhabitants of other parts of the world.

While we looked forward with pleasing hope to the dawn of knowledge thus promised to the rising generation, our hearts were filled with mingled feeling of delight and gratitude; we already offered up thanks to providence for inspiring the most generous and enlightened of the nations of the West with the glorious ambitions of planting in Asia the arts and sciences of modern Europe.

We now find that the Government are establishing a Sangskrit school under Hindoo pundits to impart such knowledge as is already current in India. This seminary (similar in character to those which existed in Europe before the time of Lord Bacon) can only be expected to load the minds of youth with grammatical niceties and metaphysical distinctions of little or no practicable use to the possessors or to society. The pupils will there acquire what was known two thousand years ago, with the addition of vain and empty subtleties since produced by speculative men, such as is already commonly taught in all parts of India.

The Sangskrit language, so difficult that almost a lifetime is necessary for its perfect acquisition, is well known to have been for ages a lamentable check on the diffusion of knowledge; and the learning concealed under the almost impervious veil is far from sufficient to reward the labour of acquiring it. But if it were thought necessary to perpetuate this language for the sake of the portion of the valuable information it contains, this might be much more easily accomplished by other means than the establishment of a new Sangskrit college; for there have been always and are now numerous professors of Sangskrit in the different parts of the country, engaged in teaching this language as well as the other branches of literature, which are to be the object of new seminary. Therefore their more diligent cultivation if desirable, would be effectually promoted by holding our premium and granting certain allowances to those most eminent professors, who have already undertaken on their own account to teach them and would by such regards be stimulated to still great exertions.

From these considerations, as the sum set apart for the instruction of the natives of India was intended by the Government in England, for the improvement of its Indian subjects, I beg leave to state, with due deference to Your Lordship's exalted situation, that if the plan now adopted be followed, it will completely defeat the object proposed; since no improvement can be expected from inducing young men to consume dozen of years of the most valuable period of their lives in acquiring the niceties of the Byakurun or Sangskrit

grammar. For instance, in learning to discuss such points as the following: Khad signifying to eat, Khaduti, he or she or it eats. Query, whether does the word Khaduti, taken as a whole, convey the meaning he, she, or it eats as are separate parts of this meaning conveyed by distinct portions of the word? As if in the English language it were asked, how much meaning is there in the eat, how much in the S? and is the whole meaning of the word conveyed by those two portions of it distinctly, or by them taken jointly?

Neither can such improvement arise from such speculations as the following, which are the themes suggested by the Vedant : In what manner is the soul absorbed into the deity? What relation does it bear to the divine essence? Nor will youths fitted to be better members of society by the Vedantic doctrines which teach them to believe that all visible things have no real existence; that as father, brother, etc. have no actual entirely, they consequently deserve no real affection and therefore the sooner we escape from them and leave the world the better. Again no essential benefit can be derived by the student of the *Memangsa* from knowing what it is that makes the killer of a goat sinless on pronouncing certain passages of the Veds, and what is the real nature and operative influence of passage of the Ved, etc.

Again the student of *Nyaya Shastra* cannot be said to have improved his mind after he has learned it into how many ideal classes the objects in the universe are divided, and what speculative relation the soul bears to the body, the body to the soul, the eye to the ear, etc.

In order to enable your Lordship to appreciate the utility of encouraging such imaginary learning as above characterised, I beg your Lordship will be pleased to compare the state of science and literature in Europe before the time of Lord Bacon with the progress of knowledge made since he wrote.

If it had been intended to keep the British nation in ignorance of real knowledge the Baconian philosophy would not have been allowed to displace the system of the schoolmen,

which was the best calculated to perpetuate ignorance. In the same manner, the Sangscrit system of education would be best calculated to keep this country in darkness, if such had been policy of the British legislature. But as the improvement of the native population is the object of the Government, it will consequently promote a more liberal and enlightened system of instruction, embracing mathematics, natural philosophy, chemistry and anatomy, with other useful sciences which may be accomplished with the sum proposed by employing a few gentlemen of talents and learning educated in Europe, and providing a college furnished with the necessary books, instruments and other apparatus.

In representing this subject to your Lordship I conceive myself discharging solemn duty which I owe to my countrymen and also to that enlightened Sovereign and Legislature which have extended their benevolent cares to this distant land actuated by a desire to improve the inhabitants and I therefore humbly trust you will excuse the liberty I have taken in thus expressing my sentiments to your Lordship.

Calcutta
The 11th December 1823.

I have etc.
Rammohun Roy

**Note 2 : Resolution Signed by Lord Bentinck and Passed on
March 7, 1833**

First : His Lordship in Council is of opinion that the great object of the British Government ought to be the promotion of European literature and science among the natives of India; and that all the funds appropriated for the purpose of education would be best employed on English education alone.

Second : But it is not the intention, of His Lordship in Council to abolish any College or School of native learning. While the native population shall appear to be inclined to avail themselves of the advantages which it affords, and His Lordship in Council directs that all the existing professors and students at all the institutions under the superintendence of the Committee shall continue to receive their stipends. But His

Lordship in Council decidedly objects to the practice which has hitherto prevailed of supporting the students during the period of their education. He conceives that the only effect of such a system can be to give artificial encouragement.

Third : It has come to the knowledge of the Governor-General in Council that a large sum has been expended by the Committee on the printing of Oriental works; His Lordship in Council directs that no portion of the funds shall hereafter be so employed.

Fourth : His Lordship in Council directs that all the funds which these reforms will leave at the disposal of the Committee be henceforth employed in imparting to the native population a knowledge of English literature and science through the medium of the English language; and His Lordship in Council requests the Committee to submit to Government, with all expedition, a plan for the accomplishment of this purpose.

NOTES

1. See *Calcutta Christian Observer* Vol. I Nos. 1, 2, 3 of June, July, August 1832 on the Sketch of the Origin, Rise and Progress of the Hindu College.
2. See Explanatory Note 1 : pp. 205-9.
3. "The system of education is one unmitigated evil. I put my best energy to destroy that system.....The present system enslaves us without allowing a discriminating use of English literature. My friend has cited the case of Tilak, Rammohun and myself. I am a miserable pigmy. Tilak and Rammohun would have been far greater men if they had not had contagion of English learningRammohun and Tilak (leave aside my case) were so many pigmies who had no hold upon the people compared with Chaitanya, Samkara, Kabir and Nanak. Rammohun and Tilak were pigmies before these, for what Samkara alone was able to do, the whole army of English knowing men can't do. I can multiply instances. Was Guru Govind a product of English education? Is there a simple English-knowing Indian who is a match for Nanak? Has Rammohun produced a single martyr of the type of Dalip Singh? I highly revere Tilak and Rammohun. It is my conviction that if Rammohun and Tilak had but received this education but had their natural training they would have done greater things like Chaitanya... :

English education has emasculated us, constained our intellect rendered us effeminate. The pre-British period was not a period of slavery. We had some sort of Swaraj, under Mogul rule." (*The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. XIX, p 477, Nov. 1920 to April 1921) Today it seems unbelievable that two centuries ago there was only one man in India—Rammohun Roy who thought of modernisation through education on western lines. There were men with Sanskrit or Persian scholastic learning but none coming anywhere near the stature of Roy. One person who came with a modern mind 35 years later, was Derozio but he had no Indian tradition in him, being western himself by birth (father Portuguese, mother English) but he wanted young Bengalee followers to be free-thinkers. Rammohun too wanted the same but he felt that the Hindus should first be acquainted with Indian traditions, thoughts and culture before free-thinking could begin.

4. See Explanatory Note 2 : p.p. 209-10.

Rammohun and His Tool (Education) for Social Transformation

OF late, it has become a fashion to evaluate a reformer's or a nation-builder's place of honour in society by the degree to which he has been able to claim (whether or not he truly deserves it) identity with the masses. No doubt society has a great responsibility for the all-round betterment of the masses, primarily in education and then in social responsibility, and also in developing a sense of obligation to their country and then to the world. Thus, strictly speaking, education should be the first and foremost, and other things will necessarily follow. Therefore a true evaluation of a leader and assignment to him a place in society should be his contribution to the people in the field of education and morality and also his contribution to the social and cultural progress of society to which he belongs because these are the foundations for any developing nation. The other view stressing rights and privileges of the masses, ignoring the fundamentals of education, is bound to lead to an uneven development of the mind, from where a return later on is most rare. If on top of this, social and religious issues are regarded by any social thinker "as far away from the life of the common people", then it becomes clear as daylight that political awareness and thoughts have been wrongly given the highest priority in man. In this matter, Rammohun has been criticised for his taking education as fundamental, for, he held that thinking and reasoning are most important for

social progress. In the opinion of some learned authors and social thinkers, education need not be emphasised as the only effective tool for the masses, for it is thought that "reason is unintelligible to the masses". One may strongly feel like joining issue here for certainly no leader worth the name, will expect to bring moral improvements by pampering their blind prejudices or exciting their passions to achieve objectives of lower order. It must be remembered that things which are of permanent value can only be acquired by hard work and thinking. Leaders of society have to lift the masses by constantly hammering into them higher ideals, lift them from traditional thinking and slothful practices.

The social thinker must not forget his objective and stoop to special pleading for an idea or for a personality. He must always remember that the masses have sufficient potentialities of rising to higher levels provided the reformer or the leader shows the way with sufficient understanding. It must be remembered that tools and techniques for social transformation will be of no avail unless the new light of education and the new vision of the future are given to them. The political technique of pressing for "rights and privileges" without at the same time pressing for "duties and obligations" (to man, society and State) will only create a chaos in the country. This results from the political bias in thinking process, and the wrong emphasis on priorities in the nation-building work.

Rammohun never neglected the masses but on the contrary it was for the masses that he started an elementary school for the lowest grades of pupils at his own expense, it was education that prompted his activities especially on modern lines, and it was in the masses that he wanted to develop a sense of reason, for which science studies was to be most useful. He realised that the new generation had to grow up with a new vision (not with the stereotyped way of looking at life) and he fought hard to establish such studies in the country. He knew that this present ideal of modern education would be very much resented by the orthodox group, for that would go against their vested interest. This is why the parasitic landholders living by extortion and oppression of the people under them,

especially the ryots, could not tolerate Rammohun in all his moves for emancipation from social bondage. These moves were primarily for the common men of the country :

1. he wanted schools of the modern type with provision for teaching science subjects for the common people as well as for the upper classes without distinction of caste or community;
2. he advocated the introduction and extension of new techniques for agriculture, cottage industry and other money-earning occupations which would give a larger income to ordinary labourers and would help to achieve all-round progress;
3. he pleaded, with the rulers of the country, on behalf of the ryots to give them economic stability and protection from the high-handedness of the landholders;
4. he led a long battle, extending over 17 or 18 years against widow-burning and social vices like polygamy. He also strove hard in favour of women's rights to ancestral property and in favour of their legitimate dues from their husband's properties;
5. he encouraged the use of the Bengali language through his own translations in the interest of the common people, relegating Sanskrit to specialised studies in literature, philosophy, etc. so that such advanced learning may not be hampered. Be it noted that the strongest opposition to the introduction of Bengali came from the pandits and orthodox leaders of society. It may be further noted that Bengali and other regional languages have been stressed in our country after independence, but Rammohun started the emphasis on Bengali and Hindi more than a century ago.

The social thinker referred to above has rightly observed "that until Rammohun appeared, nobody thought about the

common people” and yet he has been charged with lack of interest for the common people ignoring that it is for the common people that he worked so hard in every way to develop mother-tongues and he emphasised a foreign language, viz., English only in order to be in touch with western thought and cultivate science.

Our historian has been just a little less than fair to the great reformer, who was essentially a Hindu of pristine Hinduism. In this case for some unknown reason, the historian stoops to make a fantastic charge against him of a lack of interest in the common people forgetting that he himself paid in that same essay the following tribute to him for modernising India :

“In that dark, narrow-visioned and ossified India of the late eighteenth century, Rammohun’s was the only vision and voice which held India as one cultural and political entity despite her caste system, multiplicity of religions and religious sects of languages, customs and behaviour patterns and not the least, narrow local and regional prides and prejudices. Whether he was speaking of Buddhism and Sikhism, or pleading for a piece of political or economic reform, or engaging himself in polemics with the Christian missionaries, he always held up before his mind’s eye the vision and image of the totality of India. This was a rare phenomenon in India of Rammohun’s time; indeed, one cannot help perceiving that here was something which he left as a legacy to those of his successors who took upon themselves the task of modernising the country.....

Enough has gone into the essays that constitute this small book, to show that Rammohun, besides being a patriot and nationalist, albeit the first of the kind in India, was also a political and economic thinker, his ideas being basically derived from the latest in progressive political and economic thought of the West, but articulated in down to earth, practical terms.”

The “image of the totality of India” has been well-stressed

by the historian. It is to be admitted that in the present political atmosphere, it is common to underrate the elite and dismiss it as bourgeois, while politicians rule the country with their mainstay being the masses, for whose education they do little. The much-maligned elite, however, attaches special significance to mass education since it expects every member of the masses to be a potential member of the elite destined to make a social and intellectual contribution. The politician looks upon the masses mainly as materials to be exploited only for his selfish ends—and only incidentally does some good.

Finally, it may be pointed out that those who hold the view that Rammohun took up only religious and social problems, have a very partial view, for he took up with the same vigour economic and agricultural problems and placed them before the proper authorities. He knew that in those days of the Company's rule, it was only through the Government and the elite (generally landholders who were virtually the custodians of the common people's conscience) that the common people could be easily influenced. It is also true that if the elite were not well-informed, well-educated and rationally trained, the masses could not be effectively prepared. Only in recent times, a band of social workers has been approaching the masses effectively, because the elite has given them the basic training and society is no more dominated by landlords and aristocrats. Thus education has been recognised at last as the main tool for social transformation, and that reason is intelligible to the common people.

It is this ordinary education in Arts and Science about which Rammohun was so insistent—neither tactic for political gains nor Upanishadic training was a part of the education for masses that was envisaged by Rammohun. Hence Gandhi is irrelevant when he brings authors of Upanishads to belittle the great reformer. Gandhi, of course, denied it when pressed by Rabindranath Tagore, and said :

“One thing and one thing only, has hurt me, the people's belief, again plucked up from table talk, that I look upon Rammohun as a pigmy. Well, I have never anywhere

described the great reformer as a pigmy, much less regarded him as such. He is, to me, as much a giant as he is to the poet. I do not remember any occasion save one when I had to use Rammohun Roy's name. That was in connection with Western education.....it was possible to attain the highest culture without Western education. And when someone mentioned Rammohun, I remember having said that he was a pigmy compared to the unknown authors, say, of the Upanishads. This is altogether different from looking upon Rammohun as a pigmy." (*Young India*, 5. 11. 1925, p. 429).

Rammohun's Nationalism And Cosmopolitanism

COMING in contact with Digby and Woodford in his official duty, Rammohun realised there was much to learn from the British and he therefore genuinely desired that India should take all the best from them. He had no mental reservation in this matter, and what he found beneficial to his countrymen he whole-heartedly prescribed. He thought that just as in domestic life, he was entitled to seek help from a neighbour, so in national life he had a right to a help from other nations. This is why he did not find anything objectionable in his scheme of European colonisation, though he was aware of its inherent limitations. It was his conviction that India, under British rule for a number of decades, would be able to claim political independence after it had improved educationally, economically and in administrative matters. He saw that India presently was divided between state and state, caste and caste and in various other matters, and that unity would come only after a few decades. This is borne out by the following note by Victor Jacquemont on Rammohun :

“The largeness and justice of his ideas on the different states of Europe have surprised me. Formerly, when he was young, he told me that the British, the rulers of this country, were odious to him. This blind patriotism of youth made him detest the English and all who came with them. Enlightened since then as to the benefits of all kinds which

follow everywhere, the establishment of their power, he regards it as an advantage for India. When we depend, by the conditions of our existence, on all the objects and all the beings of nature, is not this furious love for national independence a chimera ? He said to me, why then, while in society the individual is, without cessation, obliged to have recourse to the assistance of his neighbour, above all if this neighbour is more strong than he, why then should a nation have this absurd pride about not depending on another ? Conquest is very rarely an evil when conquerors are more civilised than the people conquered, because they bring to them the advantages of civilisation. Many years of English domination will be necessary before India will be able to resume her political independence without losing much."

In spite of Rammohun's anxiety for freedom, at every step he saw India's deficiency in the matter of organization. Progressive thinkers were very few and organizing them was most difficult. Rammohun's feeling was that since India began its secular life very late, it would take a few decades to make men sufficiently competent to assume administrative charge, or to take united stand against all outside aggression etc. This is why he started by reforming the society with a view to make men realize the stupendous responsibilities. A general background is provided by Sandford Arnot in the obituary sketch in the *Asiatic Journal* (Sept-Dec. 1833) as quoted below :

"Though a decided reformer, he was generally a moderate one. For his own country he did not propose even an Indian legislative council like Mr. Rickards, and he deemed the English more capable of governing his countrymen well than the natives themselves. A reference of measure of internal policy to a few of the most distinguished individuals in the European and native community, for their suggestions, previous to such measures being carried into law, was the utmost he asked in the present state of the Indian public mind. He not only always contended, at least among Europeans, for the necessity of continuing British rule for at

least forty or fifty years to come, for the good of the people themselves;¹ but he stood up firmly against the proposals of his more radical friends, for exchanging the East India Company's rule for a Colonial form of Government."

The last two lines are significant for what we see today. It is, however, difficult to say what dangers or drawbacks he saw in the colonial form of Government and we do not know if the Government that was then in charge of administration was any better than or different from what his ideas about colonial government were.

Elsewhere we have given stress on general education, social and religious education and considered political education as its natural corollary. If Arnot thought that Rammohun, by forecasting 40, 50 or even 100 years, depicted a gloomy picture, what will the historian say now when freedom has come about 200 years after? The fact is that Rammohun was a realist and there was no greater lover of freedom.

Rammohun's Cosmopolitanism

It is well-known that the news of liberation anywhere always made Rammohun happy. Recorded instances are :

- (i) In the case of the people of Naples rising in revolt in 1820-21 to force their King to agree to grant them a liberal constitution, he expressed his heartfelt jubilation. When again they were later brought under subjection and humiliated by the joint mandate of the heads of several states including Austria, Prussia and Russia, his sympathy for the oppressed people was strongly expressed. The following extract is illuminating :

"In 1820-21 the Neapolitan Carbonari insurged against the Bourbon King of Naples claiming a constitution, equality among all classes, and the right to the people to decide their own destiny. The first insurrection was immediately and savagely repressed : Morelli and Silvati, two of the people's leaders, mounted the gallows. It is then that the solitary gigantic voice of Raja Rammohun Roy was heard : "My mind is

oppressed by the late news from EuropeI consider the cause of the Neapolitans as my own, and their enemies as ours."

But the revolt, so tragically born and suppressed in Naples, spread through the whole of the country. Insurrection was followed by insurrection in Milan, Modena, Coatrone, Rome, Palermo, Venice; martyrs were followed by martyrs, and war by war, without interruption for 50 years, until Rome could be proclaimed the capital of Italy in 1870. (Dr C. Riaudo of the Italian Seminary in a Tribute from Italy)

- (ii) In 1823, when Rammohun heard the news of liberation of Spanish colonies of South America, he was overwhelmed with joy and he hosted a dinner for select friends at his Calcutta house to mark the occasion;
- (iii) his sympathies were pronouncedly in favour of the liberal politicians in Spain;
- (iv) he showed the same jubilation at the victory of the Liberal Party in the Portuguese civil war, a struggle between Dom Miguel, the champion of absolutism, and Maria da Gloria, supported by the constitutionalists;
- (v) he expressed himself as a champion of Catholic emancipation in his *Mirat-ul-Akhbar* and criticised the British Government's high-handed policy towards the Irish Catholics;
- (vi) in the great rebellion of 1821, the victory of Greece over Turkey made him rejoice.

In addition, there was the well-known incident during Rammohun's voyage to Britain of his saluting the French flag in the middle of the ocean with excited exclamation, recorded as a genuine mark of his love for freedom and for the ideals of the French Revolution.

This was a special trait of his character for which he was widely admired and respected. An interesting episode may be recorded here. Rammohun got a unique present of a constitution from an unknown man—a great admirer. From a copy of the photo (plate opposite) we find that it was a dedication copy of the Spanish Constitution of 1812. It is sufficiently perplexing because no Constitution of any country (however small or however unimportant) can be dedicated to any person (however well-known and eminent the person may be). It is true that Rammohun had become an all India figure from 1815 (when his Vedantic publications began to appear) and known to Europe and the world from 1821 and throughout the highest intellectual and ecclesiastical circle of England in 1831, 1832 and 1833. In 1821 he showed the brilliance of a reformer and also had acquired some real standing in certain circles in England. It is well known to historians that the 1812 Spanish Constitution was modelled on the French revolutionary Constitution of 1791. It was in the European political tradition, fully and completely.

We referred the matter to the National Library in London and received this reply :

“Thank you for your letter of 28th September regarding Rammohun Roy. I have been unable to trace any edition of the 1812 Spanish Constitution with a title page similar to that reproduced on the enclosed photostat.....

I think it is likely that the Real Compania de Filipinas may have specially commissioned an engraved title and dedication pages for a presentation copy to Rammohun Roy. Roy was well known for his support of freedom and liberalism. It is reported that he gave a public dinner at the Town Hall in Calcutta upon receipt of the news of the establishment of constitutional government in Spain in 1820 and it is not impossible that he received this particular copy of the 1812 constitution between 1820 and the reimposition of absolutism in 1823. The Real Compania had its privileges gradually withdrawn after Fernando VII's return to Spain 1814 and was eventually forced into bankruptcy.”

We think the word 'dedication' had been wrongly used, it should have been 'presented'. From the above, our strong surmise is that some great admirer of Rammohun in England must have presented a copy of the 1812 Spanish Constitution by inscribing the word "dedication" where he should have used the word "presentation", he further inscribed the words "LA COMPANIA DE FILIPINAS" which indicate that the admirer must have been associated with the above company—whether it existed in India or elsewhere; or, this company might have prepared a brochure containing, among other things, the 1812 constitution. That individual or that company presented it to Rammohun by using the word 'dedication'. This was in recognition of Rammohun's liberalism which was well-known not only in India but had spread far and wide to England and America.

It will therefore be seen that even two centuries ago, Rammohun had a clear vision of what was likely to come in the future. Rammohun's following lines should be read with great interest :

"I am obliged to conclude that I shall not live to see liberty universally restored to the nations of Europe, and Asiatic nations, especially those that are European colonies, possessed of a greater degree of the same blessing than what they now enjoy."

What is clear from these instances is that Rammohun was essentially a freedom-loving^{1A} man. He believed in the ultimate dispensation of justice to all nations as they deserved. He also saw that India's resistance to progress was so strong that freedom would take time to come. Thus even one and a half centuries ago Rammohun had a clear vision of what was likely to come in the future for he saw how difficult it would be to organise a political group of any standing in the country which could demand gradual participation in government. Rammohun felt it would have to wait several decades until social unity and political solidarity could be achieved. In the midst of social work he was quietly waiting for more auspicious time and must have felt that his rejoicing at other nations'

independence was a sufficient indication to the authorities, of India's political aspirations. He also keenly felt that some time must elapse to allow national unity to be achieved.

For the first time with the renewal of the Charter in 1813, the missionaries and schoolmasters were freely allowed to come to India and take up work. Secular education with English as the medium started and began to take speed as time passed. Rammohun was then full forty and must have understood how economic exploitation was going on but he only looked on as a helpless spectator. Except the Indian traders who were in close collaboration with British merchants in making money, the rest of the population was not awakened to any clear direction of growth while the top literate sections of brahmins also continued as usual their old lines of sanskritic education. It was sometime after, that Rammohun was found to raise his lone voice in favour of education. Naturally one can presume that political ideas were absent among the people. One can only say that streaks of political consciousness began to appear after about six decades as clearly indicated in the formation of Indian National Congress under the guidance of some Britishers and Indians. Even as late as the seventies, Indian leaders were thinking only of higher posts and a larger participation in government administration. If anybody saw a dim vision long before of political freedom it was only Rammohun.

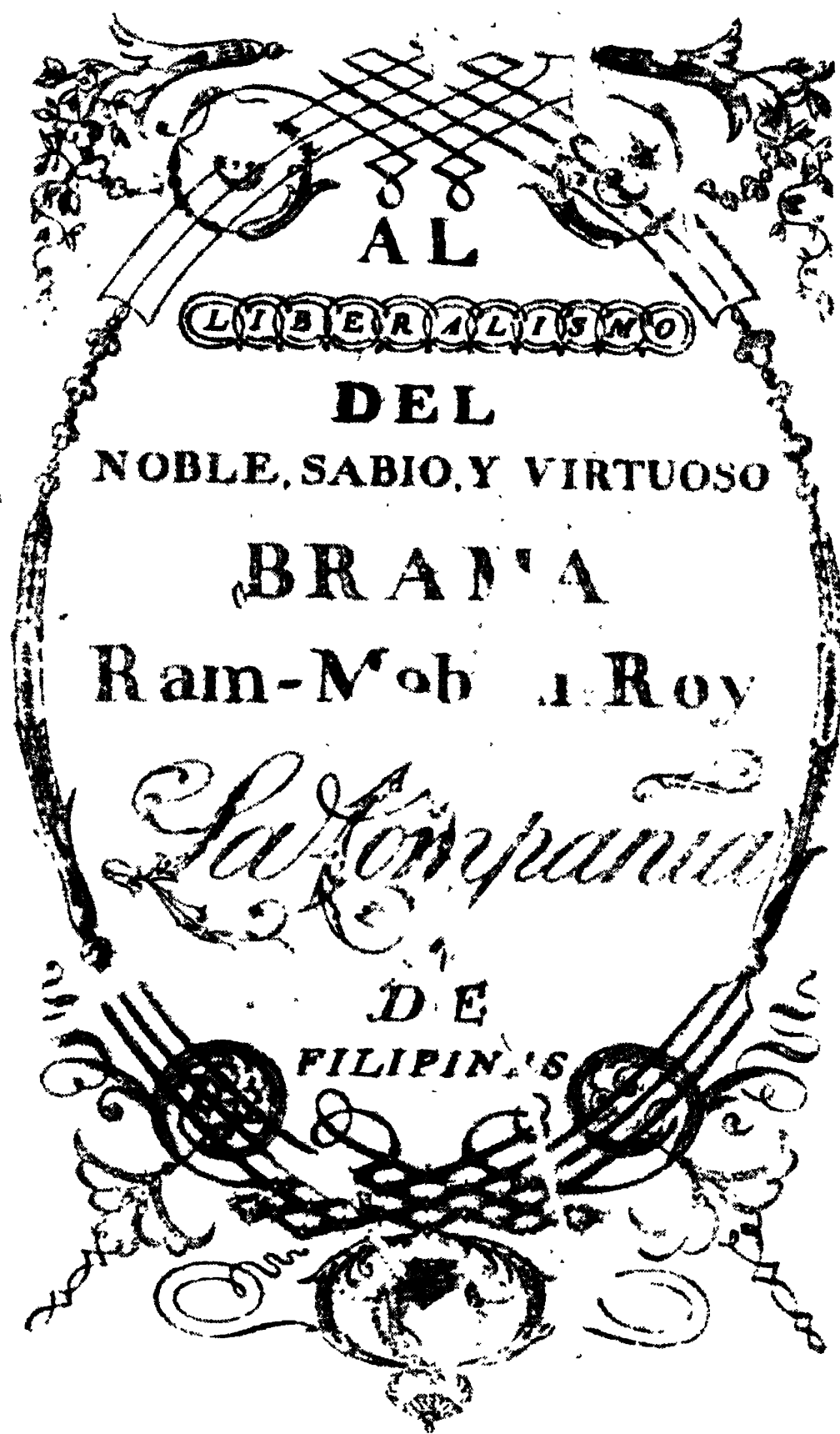
Rammohun's Nationalism and Derozio's Liberalism

Rammohun was a true nationalist not only by intellectual affiliation with everything Indian but also by life-long hard work which contributed to the nation's progress. The fundamentals of nationalism can be acquired by true education on the nation's past achievements, which together with the immediate need of the age, can sustain and promote a healthy growth of this nationalism. Rammohun's nationalism was grounded on that education which was national in character and austere in make-up. It not only emphasised nation's rights and privileges but also made people fully aware with what sure steps the nation's backwardness could be made up. Ram-

PLATES



Title-page of the Spanish Constitution of 1812
dedicated to Rammohun Roy



Dedication page of the Spanish Constitution of 1812



RAMMOHUN ROY
Ivory Miniature Delhi School
Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

mohun knew that for any political advancement, Indian society's all-round welfare was the first pre-requisite; in other words, caste-system, polygamy, kulinism etc., must be first removed and fraternal relations with other nations should be well established. If these objectives are seriously pursued in full sincerity on the broad principle of humanism, then there can be hardly anything impeding the way between nationalism and cosmopolitanism. Cosmopolitanism is an attitude of mind which looks upon other nations with friendliness and respect. It is only jingoism which stands in the way of liberalism or of internationalism. It is a small mind which takes cosmopolitanism as if it is something vague, colourless and wishy-washy and a still smaller mind it is which puts jingoism as a supreme virtue.

It is clear that Rammohun's conception of nationalism was far from condemning his own religion or any religion but reforming them where blemishes had appeared. It was his feeling of nationalism that led him to defend Hinduism and the Hindu way of life, although he was all the time fighting for removal of blemishes. For all these constructive activities Rammohun was a nationalist par excellence—a true nationalist. Yet the historian R.C. Majumdar makes somewhat unedifying comparison between Rammohun and Derozio in the following :

“Rammohun's cosmopolitanism or internationalism may be a greater or higher virtue but it is different from nationalism, and for this combination of patriotism and national consciousness which marked the New Age, the Bengalis are perhaps indebted to Derozio even more than the abstract ideas of freedom cherished by Rammohun, though they were very liberal and noble *On Rammohun's Roy*, p. 49).

Historian Majumdar has thought it fit to make the fantastic statement that for Bengal's nationalism, Bengalees are indebted to Derozio though he knows well that he was a Eurasian and never called himself an Indian nationalist. Having been born in India he had a natural attachment but essentially, he had love only for his own community which was expected—he was truly a staunch Eurasian (every inch an East-Indian) fighting

for East-Indians' rights in India as a special community, pleading for privileges with all his vehemence and probably with a secret feeling of superiority for having the ruler's blood in his veins. The petitions to British Parliament,² written very largely by Derozio and a group of Anglo-Indians would show what an emphasis had been laid on their being East-Indians—probably not a single instance as an Indian. One petition runs as follows:

“... petition is signed mostly by persons immediately descended from European fathers and native mothers... we are not recognised as British subjects by the Supreme Court of Calcutta if residing in the mofussil...” (Thomas Edward Henry Derozio : *The Eurasian poet, Teacher and Journalist*, p. 246)

Derozio's Eurasian-nationalism

From the petitions, one can see that Derozio was full of Eurasian-nationalism for every moment of his life he felt that their position was not only inferior but that they were denied equal position with the Indians. It was indeed a highly unsatisfactory state for the Eurasians but for remedying the situation, Derozio was trying as a member of that community only, while Rammohun was making utmost efforts to give all the communities in India the same privileges.³

This attitude of looking down upon the Eurasians had some reasons. At that distant time about two centuries ago, there was no educated public opinion, specially in matters where Europeans were concerned. With regard to Eurasians it must have been worse because as a result of haphazard mixture, they did not have any cultural tradition.

Derozio and Hindu religion

It is preposterous to think that a young non-Hindu, without any study of the contributions of Hinduism to world thought and without an insight into Hindu culture, should take it into his head to attack Hinduism the religion with a hoary past and the faith of the largest population in India. Derozio

was an intelligent man and thoroughly Europeanised in his mental equipment. It is understandable that he would be against Hindu orthodoxy, as all liberals would be, but an intelligent man like him need not have launched an attack on the Hindu religion which amounted not only to running down the Hindu practices but more. That

“he shook the citadel of higher Hinduism to its very foundation, in a fashion that no man, teacher or preacher has ever done before or since his day, is an undoubted fact.” : (*Henry Derozio, the Eurasian Poet, Teacher and journalist*—Thomas Edwards, p. 36).

Derozio, however, had hardly a word to say about the superstitious practices in Christianity. The fact is that being a non-Hindu, he (as an Eurasian) ought to have realised his limitations in comprehending the essentials of Hinduism. It is not meant here that a Eurasian or European can not at all evaluate Hinduism. Indeed it only depends upon a sincere and sympathetic study of the Hindu Scriptures and thoughts; how can we otherwise, explain the profound understanding of Hinduism by Max Muller who in his lectures on “India... What can it teach us” in Cambridge University in 1882 said :

“If I were asked under what sky the human mind has most fully developed some of its choicest gifts, has most deeply pondered on the greatest problems of life, and has found solutions of some of them which well deserve the attention even of those who have studied Plato and Kant—I should point to India. And if I were to ask myself from what literature we, here in Europe, we who have been nurtured almost exclusively on the thoughts of Greeks and Romans, and of one Semitic race, the Jewish, may draw that corrective which is most wanted in order to make our inner life more perfect, more comprehensive, more universal, in fact more truly human, a life, not for this life only, but a transfigured and eternal life—I should again point to India.”

Derozio judged Hinduism by External Appearances

The fact is that most often young critics who discuss religions

are superficial and in this case, Derozio, died so young that he could not assess how far the points were sound and dependable. It does not appear from any records that Derozio ever undertook to study Hinduism. His outlook on Hinduism was that of an ordinary European and his way of looking at it was superficial.⁴ He judged it by external appearances, rites and ceremonials and his love of India had no positive content. He might have written some nice verses⁵ but that was more a product of poetic sensibility. He had in his Eurasian nationalism, some positive contents but nothing of Indian nationalism.

Derozio and His Public Life

Derozio's lectures must have been exciting in as much as he was eager to teach the Hindu boys to break away from age-long conventions irrespective whether they had relevance still or not. The excitement must have come to a pitch, and it so happened that on some occasions, the Hindu pupils broke away from quiet obedience and created ugly demonstrations⁶ near College Square—some young teenagers with bottles of wine in one hand and beef in the other and hurling abuses upon their ancestral religion. Such demonstrations out of sudden excitement would be natural for thoughtless youngsters and showed how the age-long mental inhibitions were loosening. But to describe such demonstrations as precursors of nationalism or patriotism is most meaningless though certainly they could open the door to liberal thinking. For this liberalism to revive in Hindu Society, however, we have to turn to Rammohun's Atmiya Sabha which had already familiarised liberal views in all affairs of life since about ten years back. Thus it will be seen that Derozio gave nothing positive and made no contribution to constructive work for the Hindu or Muslim or Christian society which alone could bring him into the stream of Indian nationalism.

Derozio as a Teacher

As a teacher, however, Derozio was not only brilliant (he wrote a Critique of Kant) but also full of liberal western thoughts. He took it as his duty to acquaint his pupils, who

were very intimate with him, with the substance of Hume's celebrated dialogue between Cleanthes and Philo, in which the most subtle and refined arguments against theism are adduced. He taught them atheism and also agnosticism and once when questioned by the school authorities, retorted : "I have also furnished them with Dr. Reid's and Dugald Stewart's more acute replies to Hume's replies which to this day continue unrefuted. This is the head and front of my offending. If the religious opinion of the students have become unhinged in consequence of the course I have pursued, the fault is not mine". As a result of these studies, his ardent followers got their vision widened but centred in European thought and culture—never in Indian. In the process, the student developed a kind of atheism which became a new belief with them more as a fashion of modernity than actual faith. Derozio put his best efforts to serve the school and guide the students but he was unlucky. The school authorities began to dislike his ultra-radical views, European ideals and free and irresponsible thinking. Derozio was ultimately suspended on some unsubstantiated charges. There is no doubt that he was "more sinned against than sinning"; as a teacher, he was blameless and unquestionably very successful. He lost his post but what better treatment could be expected from authorities whose orthodoxy had gone beyond limits (these orthodox leaders were the supporters of sending innocent widows into the funeral pyres).

When Derozio was in full form in the Hindu College, some of his pupils could be seen zealously reading Tom Paine's *Rights of Man*, *Age of Reason* etc. and they felt inspired by what happened in the American War of Independence, French Revolution, Napoleon's rise and fall, not so much for social regeneration as for political advancement. They gave stress on human rights, the use of reason, a rational bent of mind. Derozians thought they got all these from America and the west. What to speak of Derozians, even well-read men of today forget that just five or six years before these orgies took place in College Square Rammohun had drawn the attention of India's missionaries and of the world by publishing *Precepts of Jesus* (1830) in which he took a stand of complete elimination of myths and dogmas and in these precepts he discarded what-

ever was supernatural and adopted the ethical teachings that would bring peace and happiness to mankind. Hardly four or five years passed and Derozio in 1826 joined the Hindu college where he started teaching the boys as best as he could. His enthusiasm was so great that he forgot that the boys were of tender age of fourteen, fifteen or sixteen years and yet he wanted them to cultivate free-thinking, strangely ignoring the fact that prior preparation of the base was essential, otherwise free-thinking would mean nothing but irresponsible thinking. When he was exhorting his pupils to shed all kinds of superstitious beliefs, he must have given the example of how free the Europeans were to take liquor or beef or any thing as they liked—this is why College Square incidents took that form. All serious observers and anyone interested in the matter would find that Derozio was echoing only the emphasis on reason and rationality that Rammohun pleaded for in the controversies with the missionaries between the Unitarians and the Trinitarians. Derozio, coming five or six years later, fully utilised the ideas of Rammohun but never acknowledged them, not even mentioned Rammohun's name at any time, though Rammohun was already then the St. Paul of Brohmo-faith. Derozio's efforts consisted not only in harping on getting rid of all kinds of superstitions but also in propagating the views expressed in the writings of Bacon, Hume, Tom Paine etc.

When so much stress has been laid on reason as our guide, it will be very appropriate to mention that Rammohun's childhood was marked by a noteworthy trait of character, viz., that he would not accept any idea or any belief without examining the basis or the reason of it. In any discussion with his father, whenever he had a doubt, he would interrupt his father by a "Kintu" (meaning "but") which always exasperated his father. Later on in life he developed a great fondness for quoting frequently Brihaspati's lines [See Appendix IX] the purport of which is that "any assertion made without foundation of reason and rationality goes against the true religion of man".

What is beyond doubt and controversy is that Derozio will be remembered as a teacher who kindled in his students a

desire to be acquainted with the wider world and also as one who taught them to rise above orthodoxy and superstition and thus he exercised a liberalising influence on men around him. More than all this, he will be remembered as a Bengal poet who showed brilliance in what he composed and what he composed in a short time was considerable and above all, he showed potentialities of a world-poet.

While we are discussing nationalism of Rammohun and liberalism of Derozio, it will be appropriate to stress Derozio's high dignity, his conceit, his adherence to inner conviction, his indifference to common place views, his prides and prejudices and above all, his poetical talents, and his all-round potentialities.

Derozio's reply sent to H.H. Wilson to the charges made against him (Derozio) by the school authority was a remarkable reply—bold, positive and clear. There is hardly any doubt that injustice had been done to him as a teacher. If, however the question is raised as to how far he was, from the matters stated above, an Indian nationalist, we shall quote as our final reply, the following :

“It will be superfluous to say that Krishnamohun Banerjee, Rasik Krishna Mullick, Ramgopal Ghosh, Tarachand Chakraborty, Shiv Chandra Deb, Pearychand Mitra, Ramtanu Lahiri who came out successful from the Hindu College became whole-hearted disciples of Macaulay. They not only became great supporters of English education (as against Sanskrit) but they began to echo Macaulay and proclaim that what knowledge and wisdom only one shelf of English books can impart, the entire Sanskrit literature or Arabic literature cannot impart that. From that time, Kalidas was banished and Shakespeare came in his place, Mahabharat and Ramayana with their ethical teachings disappeared and made room for Edgeworth's Tales and Bible took the place of Vedas, Vedanta and Geeta.” (This is a free translation by the author of a paragraph from Pandit Sivnath Sastri *Ramtanu Lahiri O Tatkalin Bangasamaj* p. 142).

The reader will now see what kind of nationalism the Bengalee students learnt from Derozio's teachings on which Bengal historians and literary men have gone into ecstasy specially of late. What an irony of fate, that the arch-rebel Rev. Krishnamohun Banerjee in his later years had to take, in his bosom, those Hindu thoughts which he had to discard by Derozio's free-thinking, for as early as 1837 Krishnamohun had published *Sarbartha Sangraha* though after becoming a professor of Bishop's college in 1852 he entered into a deep study of Hindu philosophy and brought out a book in 1861 *Saradarshan Sangraha*. In 1875 he published another book called *Aryan Witness* (Derozio must have turned in his grave for a moment). The greatest of that rebel group Rev. K.M. Banerjee rose to be one of the greatest men by his own merit.

Most of the other members of the rebel-group remained Hindus and devoted themselves to propagation of modern views through journals started by them. Some of the journals did not last long, still the names of the following journalists will be long remembered—Dakshinaranjan Mukherjee, Rasik Krishna Mullick, Madhav Ch. Mullick, Kylas Ch. Dutta, Bhuban Mohan Mitra, Ramgopal Ghosh, Radhanath Sikdar and Peary Charan Mitra.

NOTES

1. Probably because he knew more than Arnot and Rickards that a Legislative Council without a control on national exchequer is not of any value.
- 1A. "Though it is impossible for a thinking man not to feel the evils of political subjection and dependence on a foreign people, yet when we reflect on the advantages we have derived and may hope to derive from our connection with Great Britain, we may be reconciled to present state of things which promises permanent benefits to our posterity. Besides security from foreign invaders and internal plunders, let us ask ourselves, whether we could have rescued ourselves from the stigma of female murder under (Suttee-burning) but for the English? Whether we could otherwise have obtained the power of equalizing ourselves with the rulers—not only to civil but to criminal jurisprudence?" (Extract from a letter of Rammohun Roy from England written to a friend in India in 1832).

Dr Southworth and Alice Southworth of U.S.A. in a tribute, said:— Within thirty years of his (Rammohun) death our great President Abraham Lincoln, had given the boon of freedom to ten million African slaves. If Rammohun Roy had been alive on the First of January, 1863, he would have rejoiced at Lincoln's Proclamation as he had rejoiced at the passage of the Reform Bill in England. He would have rejoiced again half a century later when, after years of patient and heroic efforts on the part of pioneers, the franchise was accorded to American women " . . . American scholarship has followed with increasing rapidity in the steps of the great Rajah as the century has waxed and waned. In 1833 Comparative Religion was not taught at a single American University. Today it is winning an ever-enlarging place in American Universities and also in theological seminaries from the Atlantic to the Pacific...

2. In leadership, in talent, in breadth of vision, in depth of concern for the welfare of their own community and love of their native land, there has never been such a remarkable body of Anglo-Indians gathered together in such single-minded unity as the members of the committee that drafted piloted and finally presented before the British Houses of Parliament in 1831 that most damning indictment of British racialism in India which at first reared its ugly head under the Governor-generalship of Lord Cornwallis—The East Indian petition drafted by Dacosta, Wordsworth, Read, Heatly, Rickets, H.L.V. Derozio.
3. I lately sent you two dispatches by the ships Georgien and Roxburgh Castle and now lose no time in informing you that the East India Juries and Justices Bill has passed into a law, (on the 15th instant) notwithstanding strenuous opposition on the part of the Company and some of their servants. Now I beg to recollect how much despair was expressed when we were preparing the petition to Parliament five or six years ago—you intimated that there was no use in petitioning Parliament and seeking justice for the natives of India—we should not be too hasty and too sanguine in raising our condition, since gradual improvements are most durable (Extract from a letter of Rammohun Roy written from England to a friend in India in 1832).
4. "In these subjects, he (Derozio) was superficial and arrogant... In his dress, he went to the extreme of foppery, he was like woman fond of gold, and his person was adorned with a goodly quantity of it. He never wore a hat, and his hair was parted from the middle. He was conspicuous for his yellow-pointed stanhope and English horse; and it was laughable to see him in the morning, spurred and booted to the knee on a powerful Arab, coursing the plain. The effect of his dress was increased by his diminutive stature",

(E.W. Madge : *Henry Derozio, the Eurasian Poet and the Reformer*).

5. "To India—My Native Land

My Country, to thy day of glory past
A beauteous halo circled round thy brow
and worshipped as a deity thou wast" (Derozio's poem)

6. Hardly two dozens of teenagers created public demonstrations by violating Hindu customs of not taking liquor and beef. This commotion of a small group has been over-exaggerated into a revolt of young Bengal and Derozio has been called "oracle of young Bengal". It must have been a small incident which need hardly a mention more than once but in Bengal it is coming down from generation to generation with greater emphasis. As one reads India Gazette (Oct. 21, 1831) one finds a sober presentation of the position taken by the moderate section and the other Ultra-Radical section. This article in "Indian Gazette" has not made any reference of Derozio. This shows that every historian seems to add colour in his wishful thinking. From an unbiassed Study of Derozio's influence beyond his direct pupils, one can say that such influence was not visible—it was only visible in the radical group who were his constant companions. It is therefore quite clear that Derozio played his part in a very limited circle and for a limited time with all the handicaps of a Eurasian. It must however be admitted that he joined the Hindu school with very good intentions inspite of handicaps of birth. Over an above all his views, he was constantly placing the ideas of Bacon, Hume, Tom Paine etc. before his pupils.
7. Derozio's claim of explaining Hume to the boys, seems to be too much. What to speak of young boys of 14, 15, 16 years, even Derozio who was hardly eighteen or nineteen years old, would surely not have been able to follow Hume's discussions. Prof. Willey of Cambridge writes :
- "David Hume has been described as a defender of Nature against Reason. Hume is usually and rightly regarded as the arch-sceptic who overturned the philosophical card-castle by Descartes and his successors. He did indeed, destroy all traditional certainties Matter, God, Soul, Nature, Causation, Miracles, and by more rigorously applying the methods of Locke and of Berkeley he demonstrated that their philosophy led nowhere——Before Hume empiricism and sensationalism, after him, the Copernican revolution of Kant; before him, Nature and Reason go hand in hand; after him, Nature and Feeling Hume was indispensable, if only because by the very completeness of his distinctive efficacy, he showed that man cannot live by Reason alone——(The *Eighteenth Century Background* by Prof. Basil Willey, 1948 P 152)

Rammohun's Precepts of Jesus and Trinitarianism

Important dates relating to *Precepts of Jesus* :

1820 Rammohun's *Precepts of Jesus* published.

1820 Rammohun's *Appeal to the Christian Public* published.

1820 Marshman's reply in the *Friend of India* (monthly series) in May.

1821 Rammohun's *Second Appeal* in reply to Marshman published.

1821 *Brahminical Magazine* I, II and III appeared.

1823 Rammohun's *Third and Final Appeal to Christian Public*.

Rammohun designed *Precepts of Jesus* as a book on the essentials of the Christian religion. This involved careful reading of the Old Testament in Hebrew and the New Testament in Greek and both of them in English. It meant voluminous reading, comprehensive thinking and analytical comparisons of texts, keeping in mind that he was writing on the great scripture of the Christians not only for India but eventually for the whole Christian world. He was apprehensive about his ability and no less conscious of his limitations to interpret Bible to the highly intellectual Christian community. It is to the credit of Rammohun that, ingrained as he was with a strong feeling for and a faith in Christianity, he dared to face the world with a

full sense of responsibility and strength of mind in writing about Jesus.

This work, whose full title was *Precepts of Jesus, the Guide to Peace and Happiness, Extracted from the Books of the New Testament Ascribed to the Four Evangelists* was written by Rammohun in 1820 and published the same year by the Baptist Mission Press in Calcutta. In it, he gave the gist of his close reading and researches on the Biblical texts he had studied in Hebrew and Greek. The introduction to it contains in short compass the most important ideas agitating his mind at that time as shown in the following quotation :

“... a notion of the existence of the supreme superintending power, the Author and Preserver of this harmonious system, who has organised and who regulates such an infinity of celestial and terrestrial objects; and a due estimation of that law which teaches that man should do unto others as he would wish to be done by, reconcile us to human nature, and tend to render our existence agreeable to ourselves and profitable to the rest of mankind. The former of these sources of satisfaction, viz , a belief in God, prevails generally, being derived either from tradition and instruction, or from an attentive survey of the wonderful skill and contrivance displayed in the works of nature. The latter although it is partially thought also in every system of religion with which I am acquainted, is principally inculcated by Christianity. This essential characteristic of the Christian religion I was for a long time unable to distinguish as such amidst the various doctrines I found insisting upon in the writings of Christian authors, and the conversations of those teachers of Christainity with whom I have had the honour of holding communication. Amongst those opinions, the most prevalent seems to be that no one is entitled to the appellation of Christian who does not believe in the divinity of Christ and of the Holy Ghost as well as the divine nature of God, the father of all created beings. Many allow a much greater latitude to the term Christian, and consider it as comprehending all who acknowledge the Bible to contain the revealed Will of God, however they may differ from others in their interpretations of particular passages of the scripture;

whilst some require from him who claims the title of Christian only an adherence to the doctrines of Christ, as taught by himself, without insisting on implicit confidence in those of the apostles as being, except when speaking from inspiration, like other men liable to mistake and error. That they were so is obvious from the several instances of differences of opinion amongst the apostles recorded in the Acts and Epistles”.

Rammohun stressed the moral teachings of Jesus while discarding the dogmas and doctrines. He therefore attached much importance to those words of Christ which will move human hearts easily and will have a lasting effect. The following gives the desired direction :

“I confine my attention at present to the task of laying before my fellow creatures the words of Christ, with a translation from English into Sanskrit and the language of Bengal. I feel persuaded that by separating from the other matters in the New Testament, the moral precepts will be more likely to produce the desirable effect of improving the hearts and minds of men of different persuasions and degrees of understanding. For, historical and some other passages are liable to the doubts and disputes of free thinkers and anti-Christians, especially miraculous relations, which are much less wonderful than the fabricated fables handed down to the natives of Asia, and consequently could be apt at best to carry little weight with them. On the contrary, moral doctrines, tending evidently to the maintenance of peace and harmony of mankind at large, are beyond the reach of metaphysical perversion, and intelligible alike to the learned and to the unlearned. This simple code of religion and morality is so admirably calculated to elevate man's ideas to high and liberal notions of one God, who has equally subjected all living creatures, without distinction of caste, rank, or wealth, to change, disappointment, pain and death, and has equally admitted all to be partakers of the bountiful mercies which he has lavished over nature.....”

The editorial comments of Marshman were very pungent and described Rammohun as :

“An intelligent heathen, whose mind is as yet completely opposed to the grand design of the Saviour becoming incarnate.”

Rev. Deocar Schmidt also sharply commented that :

“Rammohun Roy would injure the cause of Christianity.”

The Christian missionaries, particularly the Baptists of Serampore, took the tract as an affront coming from an outsider, as an unpardonable encroachment upon their religion and as a perverted presentation of Christianity. In the journal *Friend of India* of February 1820, the following appeared as a reply written by a missionary with editorial comments by Dr. Joshua Marshman :

“This work, while it furnishes an overwhelming proof of the truth and excellence of the sacred Scriptures, since an intelligent heathen whose mind is as yet completely opposed to the grand design of the Saviour’s becoming incarnate, feels constrained to acknowledge that the precepts of Jesus the Saviour are so fully consonant with truth and righteousness, so exactly suited to the circumstances of making . those of his countrymen, as well as those of the Western world... lend so evidently, to maintain the peace and harmony of mankind...the manner in which this is done, as is justly observed by our highly esteemed correspondent, may greatly injure the cause of truth....

It was further stated in the course of the notice that it would degrade the Redeemer of the world to a level with Confucius or Mahomet, and to contemplate him as a Teacher and Founder of a sect, instead of adoring him as the Lord of all, the Redeemer of men, the Sovereign Judge of the quick and the dead.”

The above comment did not show good taste and Rammohun was naturally offended specially at the term “heathen” used as a mark of contempt. But he took it coolly and answered Marshman and Schmidt with dignity and self-control in an article of about 20 pages entitled *An appeal to the Christian Public in Defence of the ‘Precepts of Jesus’ by a Friend of Truth*. The arguments were so forceful, so refresh-

ing and so convincing that they cornered both the contributor as well as the editor Marshman. Apart from flinging back the charge of heathenism with unchallengeable extracts proving the invalidity of the editor's contention, Rammohun gave a unique presentation of those notions that formed the main core of Christianity. But the missionaries thought this was a violence done to the Biblical texts by separating its ethical portions.

Yet the fact remains that all the time, he showed humility, as is evident from the last two lines of his letter to a friend, Col. B :

"...favour me with your and S.J's opinion respecting my idea of Christianity as expressed in those tracts when an opportunity may occur, as I am always open to conviction and correction."

Upon this Marshman wrote in 1820 in a subdued tone and tried to explain away the use of the term "heathenism". He, however, stuck to his position of refusing to call a Christian anyone who did not accept the divinity and atonement of Jesus Christ, and divine authority of the whole of the holy scriptures. This article ran into 32 pages in the *Friend of India*. Marshman wrote :

"A few months ago when it was announced that a compilation from the four Gospels by a native of India was in the press, designed for the use of his countrymen, much interest was excited in all who had witnessed his laudable endeavours to expose the folly of the system of idolatry universally prevalent among his countrymen. The idea of a well-informed Hindu bearing witness to the authenticity and excellence of the divine writings, and recommending them to the perusal of his countrymen as being able to make them win into salvation through faith in Christ Jesus, delighted all who felt an interest in the happiness of their Indian fellow-subjects, and regarded their reception of the Sacred Oracles in all their divine authority, as the grand means by which this could be secured..."

Marshman continued :

"But great was this disappointment, it was heightened by

their perceiving that the introduction to this compendium, instead of treating with reverence the other parts of the sacred oracles, unhappily tended rather to impugn them, the reader being told that historical and some other passages are liable to doubts and disputes of free thinkers and anti-christians, especially miraculous relations, which are much less wonderful than the fabricated tales handed down to the natives of Asia, and consequently would be apt at best to carry little weight with them. These hints respecting the rest of the sacred writings, particularly when taken in connection with the note added at the foot of the page as a specimen of these fabricated tales more wonderful than the miracles of Christ : 'That Ugusti is famed for having swallowed the ocean when it had given him offence, and for having restored it by urinary evacuation, and that at his command also the Vindhya range of mountains prostrated itself and so remains, appeared likely to convey ideas of them so contrary to that deep and just reverence with which both the doctrines and the miracles they contain must be regarded, if they become the means of salvation, that those who duly venerate the sacred oracles, could not but feel grieved that they should be thus held out to those who, despising idolatry for the grossness and folly, might probably be enquiring for something on which they might build their hopes of future happiness'.

Rammohun replied in his *Second Appeal* (about 97 pages) in 1821. Since Rammohun's reply was elaborate, we can do no better than to append below the summary, Miss Collet so admirably made, including in it the most essential features of Rammohun's article :

"He repudiates any desire to challenge the credibility of the miracles recorded in the New Testament, or to put them on a level with the marvels of Hindu mythology. He had only recognised the fact that the Hindu mind was as it were sordden with stories of miracles, and he had hoped to direct his countrymen to those precepts, the moral sublimity of which had first moved him to admiration of Christianity. He describes himself by implications as 'labouring in the promulgation of Christianity'. He then opposes the main

position advanced by Dr. Marshman. He disputes the consonance with justice of Dr Marshman's theory of Atonement. But he declares that he has 'repeatedly acknowledged Christ as the Redeemer, Mediator and Intercessor with God on behalf of his followers'. He confesses himself moved by his reverence for Christianity and its author to indicate it from the charge of polytheism, for he regards Trinitarianism as essentially polytheism. He has little difficulty in disposing of Dr. Marshman's endeavours to prove the doctrine of Trinity from the Old Testament. On the New Testament he resorts to exegetical methods familiar to Unitarians, in order to establish the impersonality of the Holy Spirit. On the baptismal formula he avers that it is proper that those who receive the Christian religion, should be baptised in the name of the Father, who is the object of worship of the Son who is the Mediator and of that influence by which spiritual blessings are conveyed to mankind, designated in the Scriptures as the Comforter, Spirit of Truth, or Holy Spirit. He makes an excursion into pre-Nicene history and recalls how in the first and purest ages of Christianity, the followers of Christ entertained very 'different opinions on the subject of the distinction Father, Son and Holy Spirit' without being excommunicated. The precepts of Jesus, which no other religion can equal, much less surpass, do not, he insists, depend on the metaphysical arguments and mysteries with which they have been associated."

The *Second Appeal*, the gist of which has been quoted above from Miss Collet's biography has been acclaimed to be an excellent piece of literature conveying Rammohun's high moral flavour and deep attachment to Christ. It is worth while quoting the fine description that Miss Mary Carpenter has given about Rammohun's *Second Appeal* :

"Dr. Marshman, of Serampore College, published a series of animadversions which led to a remarkable reply from Rammohun Roy...the *Second Appeal*..with his name prefixed, which is distinguished by the closeness of his reasonings, the extent and critical accuracy of his scriptural knowledge, the comprehensiveness of his investigations, the judiciousness of his arrangement, the lucid statement of

his own opinions, and the acuteness and skill with which he controverts the position of his opponents."

Again in the *Friend of India* of June 1821, Dr. Marshman wrote the reply of the *Second Appeal* with a close examination of the points raised by Rammohun. The Baptists, as a sect, could not appreciate the refined and liberal interpretations of Scriptures given by Rammohun. Marshman in his reply on it (130 pages) rejected in toto the contribution of Rammohun in respect of Atonement and Trinity, concluding his observations with a piece of advice sarcastically made which ran as follows :

... "let us then affectionately entreat him to reconsider the subject and peruse the Scriptures now; and may the God of all grace enable him to discern the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, that he may in future determine 'to know nothing but Jesus and him crucified'...in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

Rammohun understood now that the missionaries led by Rev. Marshman would not see the true message of Jesus as Rammohun understood it and hence he decided to close the controversy after giving an exhaustive reply. He wrote out a longer reply this time which ran to 256 octavo pages under the title— *A Final Appeal* to the Christian public in defence of the *Precepts of Jesus*. One is struck by the interest and conviction with which Rammohun wrote out such an exhaustive reply in which he showed vast reading, respectful presentation and deep understanding without any prejudice or passion. When the last article (*Final Appeal*) was sent, the editor of the *Journal* did not accept it for publication. Rammohun had to set up his own printing press (Unitarian Press in Dhurramtalla Street, Calcutta) for the publication of the *Final Appeal*. It is needless to say that for Rammohun, this was a challenge, and nothing in the world could stop him from making it a public document so that a fair verdict might be passed on the subject sooner or later. In his preface he wrote :

"Notwithstanding the apprehension of exciting displeasure in the breasts of many worthy men, I feel myself obliged to lay before the public at large, this my self-defence, entitled. *A Final Appeal to the Christian Public*.

I, however, confidently hope that the liberal among them will be convinced by a reference to the first part of this Essay, and to my two former *Appeals*, that the necessity of self-vindication against the charge of being an injurer of the cause of truth has compelled me, as a warm friend of that cause, to bring forward my reasons for opposing the opinions maintained by so large a body of men highly celebrated for learning and piety—a consideration which I trust will induce them to regard my present labours with an eye of indulgence.

I am well aware that this difference of sentiment has already occasioned much coolness towards me in the demeanour of some whose friendship I hold very dear; and that this protracted controversy has not only prevented me from rendering my humble service to my countrymen by various publications which I had projected in the native languages but has also diverted my attention from all other literary pursuits for three years past. Notwithstanding these sacrifices, I feel well satisfied with my present engagement, and cannot wish that I had pursued a different course; since whatever may be the opinion of the world, my own conscience fully approves' of my past endeavours to defend what I esteem the cause of truth.

In my present vindication of the unity of the Deity, as revealed through the writings of the Old and New Testaments, I appeal not only to those who sincerely believe in the books of Revelation, and make them the standard of their faith and practice, and who must, therefore, deeply feel the great importance of the divine oracles being truly interpreted; but I also appeal to those who, although indifferent about religion, yet devote their minds to the investigation and discovery of truth, and who will, therefore, not think it unworthy of their attention to ascertain what are the genuine doctrines of Christianity as taught by Christ and his apostles, and how much it has been corrupted by the subsequent intermixture of the polytheistical ideas that were familiar to its Greek and Roman converts and which have continued to disfigure it in succeeding ages. I extend my appeal yet further; I solicit the patient attention of such individuals as are rather unfavourable to the

doctrines and are really such as they are understood to be by the popular opinion which now prevails."

This illuminating Preface ended thus :

"As religion consists in a code of duties which the creature believes he owes to his Creator, and as God has no respect for persons; but in every nation, he that fears him and works righteousness is accepted with him, it must be considered presumptuous and unjust for one man to attempt to interfere with religious observances of others, for which he well knows he is not held responsible by any law, either human or divine. Notwithstanding, if mankind are brought into existence, and by nature formed to enjoy the comforts of society and the pleasures of an improved mind, they may be justified in opposing any system, religious, domestic or political, which is inimical to the happiness of society or calculated to debase the human intellect; being always in mind that we are children of One Father, 'who is above all and through all and in us all'".

This controversy created some sensation in ecclesiastical circles in Britain, America and Europe. There were some in Britain and in America who were greatly interested in his new approach to the understanding of the teachings of Jesus. A correspondent who designated himself "A Firm Believer in Christ" wrote :

"Here we observe an individual, born and bred in a country benighted under the most gross idolatry and superstition, who, by a just use of that understanding which our gracious Creator has given to mankind to guide them to all truths, having discovered the falsehood of that system of Idolatry and the absurdity of those superstitions conscientiously abandoned both, and thereby subjected himself to inconvenience and dangers of which persons living in more enlightened societies can hardly form an idea. Next he directed his attention to the Christian religion; and that same just and honest use of his understanding, which discovered a falsehood and absurdity of idolatry and superstition, satisfied him that Jesus and the Messiah, that he was employed by God to reveal his Will to men, and to make known to them

the only true religion. He observed the internal and historical evidence of Christianity, to be such as demonstrated its truth. Blessed with the light of Christianity, he dedicated his time and his money not only to release his countrymen from the state of degradation in which they exist, but also to diffuse among the European masters of his country, the sole true religion—as it was promulgated by Christ, his apostles and disciples.”

At this time (1821) a strong attack came from Rev. Deocar Schmidt on Vedanta with the charge that Vedanta taught pantheism. He said :

“...I entertain still the same sentiment with regard to the pantheistical nature of the system of the Vedas, which I have expressed in this letter: and the arguments against the pretensions of the Vedas and in favour of the Bible...appear to me at the present time as weighty and convincing as when they were first written.” (1819)

Brahminical Magazine I, II and III and Brahman Sebadhi I, II and III

Samachar Darpan in its issue of July, 1821 started fresh attacks on the doctrines of *Vedanta*, *Nyaya*, *Mimansa* and *Sankhya* and Rammohun felt that this would remain an insult to the Hindu sastras if he did not send replies to the *Darpan*. The replies were sent but the *Darpan* did not publish them. Rammohun now started a new magazine called *Brahminical Magazine* in English and *Brahman Sebadhi* (there were only four issues of the English section and three of the Bengali section under the name Sivaprasad Sarma—though actually Rammohun was the writer). The first two issues of the *Brahminical Magazine* included *Samachar Darpan's* two articles which were the cause of provocation to Rammohun, along with his own reply. In this article he established the monotheism of Vedanta. In the same he further pointed out some fantastic beliefs in the Old Testament and criticised it with a view to suggest that these were superficial beliefs on ground of which neither Old Testament could be disregarded nor Vedas stigmatised as pantheistic and polytheistic. One had to rise above and

try to comprehend the real import of the concepts as embodied in the Vedas and the Christian scriptures. Rammohun brought out issue No. I, II and III in English pointing out their lack of understanding of Vedanta's message. The number IV published (end of 1823) a reply from Rammohun to the charge of "Atheism" in Vedanta hurled by the missionaries. Then followed the following lines from Rammohun :

"I shall now, in a few words, for the information of the missionary gentlemen, lay down our religious creed. In conformity with the precepts of our ancient religion, contained in the Holy Vedanta, though disregarded by the generality of moderns, we look up to One Being as the animating and regulating principle of the whole collective body of the universe, and as the origin of all individual souls which in a manner somewhat similar, vivify and govern their particular bodies; and we reject idolatry in every form and under whatsoever veil of sophistry it may be practised, either in adoration of an artificial, a natural or an imaginary object..."

In the first and second issues of *Brahman Sebadhi*, the enquiries and questions of the missionaries and Rammohun's replies thereto were published. But the answers to Rammohun's above replies were published in *Friend of India* (issue 38)

In the third issue of *Brahman Sebadhi* Rammohun put some counter questions in respect of Jesus Christ as delineated in the Scriptures. The Christian missionaries attacked both Hinduism and Hindu Scriptures and passed derogatory remarks about them. Rammohun protested against them vehemently. The missionaries attacked the Hindu idol-worship and their rituals and ceremonials in such a taunting and insulting manner that Rammohun could not (though he also deprecated certain corruptions, fully knowing and realising that the fundamental position was sound) tolerate its coming from foreign missionaries who had not the intention nor the background to follow the higher concepts on which Hindu philosophy stood—whether its historical thought-currents, or its aspects based on subtle mysticism.

The subject which engaged the serious attention of Rammohun was thus a correct understanding of the fundamentals of Christianity. It was his conviction that the precepts of Jesus formed a sound basis of ethical life; he also believed that both ethical and religious life constituted a full man. Just as Rammohun was fighting against certain popular misconceptions in Hinduism, so was he against the many similar misconceptions in Christianity. Hence he drew attention of the Christians to the doctrines of Atonement, Resurrection and Divinity of Christ, so that proper valuation could be made of these concepts and Christian life could be regulated for higher thoughts and achievements. Christian life had to give necessary stress on the religious side, ethical side and, on a higher plane, also on eternal bliss. In Rammohun's thinking-process, the way to eternal bliss could only be unitarianism.

Rammohun's position could be understood only by the fact that he was a genuine follower of Christ, equally of Mahomet and a staunch believer in Advaitism of Hinduism. The fact is that he dedicated himself to the concept of the highest synthesis of all religions. This follows from his conviction that a large number of fundamentals were common to all religions and that their differences were only on non-fundamentals.

The Swiss historian Sismondy, wrote in 1824, in the *Revue Encyclopedique* :

"A glorious reform has, however, begun to spread among the Hindus. A Brahmin, whom those who know India agree in representing as one of the most virtuous and enlightened men, Rammohun Roy, is exerting himself to restore his countrymen to the worship of the true God, and to the union of morality..."

Rev. Adam Becomes a Unitarian

The *Precepts of Jesus* raised a storm of controversy which lasted about three years, and the main events have been recorded in sequence. In the meantime, in 1821, a very important development took place. Rammohun had been in close touch for some time with many Christians including missionaries among

whom special mention should be made of Rev. Yates and Rev. Adam, two members of the Baptist Mission of Serampore, who had a good reputation as scholars in oriental and classical learning, the Bengali language in particular. They were impressed very much by Rammohun's catholic views and social activities. Yates wrote about Rammohun in a letter dated August, 1816 :

"I was introduced to him about a year ago; before this he was not acquainted with anyone who cared for his soul. Sometime after I introduced Eustace Carey to him, and we have had repeated conversations with him. When I first knew him he would talk only on metaphysical subjects such as the eternity of matter, the nature and qualities of evidence, etc. but he has lately become much more humble and disposed to converse about the Gospel. He has many relations, Brahmins, and has established religious worship among them. He maintains the unity of God, and hates all heathen idolatries. He visited Eustace lately and stayed to family prayers with which he was quite delighted. Eustace gave him Dr Watts' hymns, he said he would treasure them up in his heart. He has been to Serampore once, and has engaged to come and see me in the course of a few days. He has offered Eustace a piece of ground for a school."

Adam also bore testimony to the impression Rammohun had made on him :

"I was never more thoroughly, deeply and constantly impressed than when in the presence of Rammohun Roy and in friendly and confidential converse with him, that I was in the presence of a man of natural and inherent genius, of powerful understanding, and of determined will, determined with singular energy and uncontrollable self-direction, to lofty and generous purposes. He seemed to feel, to think, to speak, to act, as if he could not but do all this, and that he must do it only in and from and through himself, and that the application of any external influence, distinct from his own strong will, would be the annihilation of his being and identity. He would be free or not be at all....."

It was in 1821, after the *Second Appeal* had created a sensation, that Adam felt irresistibly drawn to the Unitarian faith and gave up Trinitarianism. This conversion was quite sensational not only in India but also in Europe for a heathen of India had converted a well-known man like Adam to Unitarianism. Adam wrote the following letter :

“It is now several months since I began to entertain some doubts respecting the Supreme Deity of Jesus Christ, suggested by frequent discussions with Rammohun Roy, whom I was endeavouring to bring over to the belief of that doctrine, and in which I was joined by Mr Yates, who also professed to experience difficulties on the subject. Since then, I have been diligently engaged in studying afresh the Scriptures with a view to this subject, humbly seeking divine guidance and illumination, and I do not hesitate to confess that I am unable to remove the weighty objections which present themselves against this doctrine I do not mean to say that there are no difficulties in rejecting it, but the objections against it, compared with the arguments for it, appear to me like a mountain compared with a molehill.”

By these writings, the orthodox members of the Baptist Mission were very much agitated and Rammohun had to pass through a very strenuous time. In this period, in 1821, the Unitarian Society was established in Calcutta.

Dr Tytler's Controversy with Ram Doss 1823

What is popularly known as the Tytler controversy (controversy between Surgeon Tytler, an employee under the East India Company and Ram Doss which is a pseudonym of Rammohun Roy) comes under the broad name of a piece of writing —“A vindication of the incarnation of the Deity, as the common basis of Hinduism and Christianity against the schismatic attack of Tytler By Ram Doss”—(Ram Doss is the name assumed by Rammohun Roy in many of his satirical writings). The Tytler controversy (See Explanatory Note given below) was most illuminating.

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The following letter from Dr Tytler, an employee (surgeon) of the East India Company, appeared in the *Hurkaru*, of May 3, 1823 and sparked the long controversy with Ram Doss. This controversy makes excellent reading as it reveals Ram Doss's intellectual depth, sense of humour and satire and his able presentation of his case. It also reveals Tytler's irritable disposition and uncontrollable temper. Tytler's letter reads :

Whether you be a faithful believer in the Divinity of the Holy Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ or of any other mortal man; or whether a Hindu declares himself a faithful believer in the Divinity of his Holy Thakoor Trata Ram or Munoo, I feel equally indifferent about these notions. Here I pause for the purpose of asking the candid reader what would have been said if, at the time Rammohun Roy continued in his belief of Siva, Vishnu and Ganesh, I had personally addressed a letter to him replete with vituperation of him and his opinions? Would it not have been asserted, and very justly, that I was attacking him and his gods, and wounding the religious feelings of a Hindu? Yet the Unitarian, as he now professes himself, thinks proper to leave the subject of discussion, namely a proposal to hold a 'Religious Conference, and tells me flatly that my belief in the Divinity of The Holy Saviour is on a par with a Hindu's belief in his Thakoor ! Yes, Christian Readers, such is the fact; and when I offer to defend myself from such vile imputations by arguments drawn from those Holy Scriptures to which this Unitarian himself appeals, I am given to understand, that this reviler of my faith, the faith of my ancestors, will not condescend to listen unless my reply receives the stamp of orthodoxy from the signature of a missionary.

R. Tytler

To the above, Ram Doss replied :

Sir, I happened to read a letter in the *Harkaru* of the 3rd instant under the signature of R. Tytler, which has excited my wonder and astonishment

Is there any Hindoo who would be offended at being told by a believer in the invisible God that his man is indifferent about his (the Hindoo's) faith in the divinity of his Holy Thakur and Trata Ram or Munoo ?.....

I am more particularly astonished that a man of your reputed learning and acquirements should be offended at the mention of the resemblance of your belief in the Divinity of Jesus Christ with a Hindoo's belief in his Thakoor, because you ought to know that our religious faith and yours are founded on the same sacred basis, viz., the manifestation of God in the Flesh, without any restriction to a dark or fair complexion, large and small stature, long or short hair, You cannot surely be ignorant that the Divine Ram was reputed son of Dushuruth, of the offspring of Bhugeeruth, of the tribe of Rughoo, as Jesus was the reputed son of Joseph, of the House of David, of the tribe of Judah. Ram was the king of the Rughoos and of foreigners, while in like manner Jesus was the king of the Jews and Gentiles. Both are stated in the respective sacred books handed down to us, to have performed very wonderful miracles and both ascended to Heaven. Both were tempted by the Devil while on the earth, and both have been worshipped by millions up to the present day. Since God can be born of the tribe of Judah, how I ask is it impossible that he should be born of the tribe of Rughoo, or of any other nation or race of men? And as the human form and feelings of Ram afford sceptics no good argument against his omnipresent and divine nature, it must be evident to you that this deluded sect of Unitarianism can lay no stress on the human form and feelings of Jesus Christ as disproving his divinity.

Where therefore the resemblance is so very striking, and ought to be known to you as well as to every other man having the least pretensions to an acquaintance with the learning and religion of the natives of India, how is it possible that you can feel offended at the mention of a fact so notorious? You may perhaps urge that there is a wide difference between a belief in Three Persons in the Godhead as maintained by you, and belief in 330 millions of persons in the Godhead entertained by the Hindoos. But as all such numerical objections are founded on the frail basis of human reason, which we well

know is fallible, you must admit that the same omnipotence which can make Three One and One Three, can equally reconcile the Unity and Plurality of 330 millions, both being supported by a sublime mystery which far transcends all human-comprehension.

The vain and narrow-minded believers in one Invisible God accuse the followers of the Trinity as well as us the sincere worshippers of Ram and other divine incarnations of being Idolators; and policy therefore might have suggested to you the propriety of maintaining a good understanding and brotherhood among all who have correct notions of the manifestation of God in the flesh, that we may cordially join and go hand in hand of a single God which strikes equally at the root of Hindooism and Christianity. However, it is not too late for you to reflect on your indiscretion, and atone for it by expressing your regret at having written and published anything calculated to create dissension among the worshippers of Divine Incarnations.

I am Sir, Your most obedient servant,
Ram Doss

Dr Tytler replied :

I have received your letter and beg you to receive my best thanks for the trouble you have put yourself to in sending it to me. It was my intention this evening to have proved that Hindu idolatry and Unitarianism are the same, and that they both proceed from the devil. Unfortunately Mr Robinson, in consequence of the number who were anxious so attend, has requested me to postpone the meeting, to which of course I have acceded. But I am ready, mind you Ready, to meet you and your renegade friend Rammohun Roy whenever you please in public and private discussions, and let you know what a humble individual unsupported can do, armed with no other weapon than the sharp sword of the Gospel in bringing to light the hidden works of darkness, which are at present displayed in the damnable heresy of Unitarianism, of which you are the wretched tool. But neither you, Rammohun Roy, nor the second fallen Adam dare meet me because you fear the word of truth

Your inveterate and determined foe in the Lord,

May 6, 1823

R. Tytler

Ram Doss's Reply to a Remark of the Editor of the *Bengal Hurkaru*

Sir,

..... I am truly astonished at your refusal to insert my very friendly reply and expostulation with him (Tytler) for the error and indiscretion into which he has fallen, and that you moreover defend him in the following words : "We would hint to Ram Doss that there is in our opinion a wide difference between the belief which maintains God to have appeared in the flesh and that of the "Hindoo who believes in the appearance of the omnipotent being in the shape of a Thakoor, which if we are not mistaken is composed of stone, metal or wood".

I must remark first on the total unacquaintance you have displayed with the Hindoo religion notwithstanding your residence in the capital of Bengal, in which however you are more excusable than Dr Tytler, considering his high pretensions to learning. Can you find a single Hindoo in the whole of India who imagines that the divine Ram, the son of Dushuruth by Koushilya his mother according to the flesh was composed either of wood, stone or metal? If you can find even one, there may be some excuse for your mistake in supposing what is so wide of the fact. You may of course find numerous consecrated images or statues of the holy Ram in the Hindoo temples formed of wood and other materials placed there for the pious purpose of attracting the attention of devotees to Divine Incarnations, although many good Hindoos do not consider such representations as necessary and worship Ram directly without the intervention of any sensible object. But can you suppose for a moment that a model or picture of any person, whether divine or human, can identify that being with such representation or convert the original existence into the same materials? If this were the case, then the number of men so unfortunate as to have statues or portraits of themselves made must lose their real essence, their original elements necessarily degenerating into stone, or paint and canvas.

But it is indisputable that neither the image of the Holy Jesus in Roman Catholic Churches, nor the representations of the divine Ram in the Hindoo Temples, are identified with either of those sacred persons

As you have refused to publish my letter in answer to Dr Tytler's attack, I shall take an opportunity of sending it directly to himself for his consideration and reply, and propose very soon laying this controversy before the public through some other channel with proper mention of your partial conduct in circulating Dr Tytler's insulting insinuations against the Hindoo Religion and withholding my answer thereto for its vindication. I expect you will kindly insert this letter in your Paper of tomorrow along with a justification of your own observations of this morning.

I am, Sir, your most obedient servant,
Ram Doss

The Editor of the paper published this letter with his own comments, which included :

....."we never intended to intimate that any sensible Hindoo could for one moment suppose that God was personally present in an image of brass, stone or metal; but we have no hesitation in asserting that such an opinion does prevail, not only among the Hindoos but among the ignorants of all classes whose religious faith prescribes the worship of images as the medium of access to the Deity....." (*Bengal Hurkaru* of May 8, 1823).

Now Ram Doss challenged Tytler :

Being disappointed in my just expectation of having my answer to Dr Tytler's insinuations inserted in your Paper, I yesterday sent it to the Doctor himself for his consideration; but he avoids making a reply thereto, and in answer to my arguments merely returns abuse against me, and likewise against our common enemies, the Unitarians, for which last, I, of course, care nothing.

I take this opportunity of informing the Public that this Goliath, notwithstanding his high pretensions to learning and presumption in setting himself up as the champion of Chris-

tianity, shrinks from the defence of the charges he has brought against Hindooism, and that he refuses to co-operate with me in opposing Unitarianism, although he declares in his note to me that it is a system of damnable heresy proceeding from the devil.

I am, Sir, your most obedient servant,
May 7, 1823. Ram Doss

Tytler replied :

.....Two days ago I received an epistle subscribed Ram Doss which, I was led to conclude, must have been written by some Unitarian under a pseudonymous signature. But it appears from a letter which is published in your paper of this day I may have been mistaken; and I am, therefore, anxious to inform Ram Doss, if he be a real person, that I consider there is no book at present in possession of Hindus—the Mahabharata and Ramayana not excepted—of higher antiquity than the entrance of the Musulmans into India—say about 800 years from the present period. The legends attached to the Avatars are merely perverted and corrupted copies of the Holy Scriptures in the possession of Christians and have no particular relation to the ancient religion, whatever it may have been, of the inhabitants of this country. Should Ram Doss therefore be a real person, and wish to obtain information on those topics, it will afford me sincere pleasure to meet him, either at my own house or any other he may appoint, at some hour convenient to us both, for the purpose of explaining the arguments which support the view I have taken of the modernness of the religious system at present followed by the Hindus.

Your obedient servant
May 8th, 1823. R. Tytler

Ram Doss again challenged Tytler in the following :

Dr Tytler having been unable to make a direct reply to the arguments conveyed in my letter to him dated the 5th instant, has taken refuge in your Paper, knowing very well that he would prevail upon you to insert every assertion that he might

make against our Sacred Books and Holy Incarnations, and that you as a Christian would excuse yourself for declining to give publicity to my retaliation upon him. I therefore challenge him through your pages for a reply to my arguments in the shape of a letter, so that I may endeavour through some other means to publish all our correspondence for the consideration and judgement of the Public.

I am, Sir, Your obedient servant,
May 9th, 1823. Ram Doss

Tytler replied as follows :

Your correspondent Ram Doss in "informing the public," that I consider "Unitarianism a system of damnable heresy proceeding from the Devil, has forgot to mention that such was also my expressed opinion to him respecting the superstitions to which he is so extremely partial. Under those circumstances is it reasonable to expect that I will allow him to cooperate with me, as he calls it "Against our common enemies, when in fact I maintain Unitarianism to be nothing more than a new name for Hindu Idolatry" ?

Your obedient servant,
R. Tytler

Calcutta, May 10, 1823

Ram Doss's Reply to "A Christian"

(Published in a Pamphlet containing an account of Dr Tytler's Lecture circulated with the *Bengal Hurkaru*.)

I regret to observe by the letter in your Paper of this morning signed "A Christian" that in repelling the offensive insinuations of Dr. Tytler against the Hindoo Religion, I am considered by one of the Christian denominations as endeavouring to degrade his "Faith".

It is well known to you, Sir, that I privately sent a letter to the Doctor, refuting his position in the most friendly, calm

argumentative manner, to which he returned a note loading me with the grossest abuse; consequently I thought myself justified in challenging him publicly to make a reply to my arguments. The Christian therefore cannot conceal from himself that it is I and my Faith which have been vilified and abused and that in return, I have offered not insult, but merely reason and argument; for it cannot be considered insult for a man to say that another religion is founded on the same basis with his own, which he believes to be all that is venerable and sacred.

If by the "Ray of Intelligence" for which the "Christian" says we are indebted to the English, he means the introduction of useful mechanical arts, I am ready to express my assent and also my gratitude; but with respect to Science, Literature or Religion, I do not acknowledge that we are placed under any obligation. For by a reference to history it may be proved that the World was indebted to our ancestors for the first dawn of knowledge, which sprang up in the East, and thanks to the Goddess of Wisdom, we have still a philosophical and copious language of our own, which distinguishes us from other nations who cannot express scientific or abstract ideas without borrowing the language of foreigners.

Rammohun Roy's abandonment of Hindoo doctrines (as "A Christian" mentions) cannot prove them to be erroneous; no more than the rejection of the Christian Religion by hundreds of persons who were originally Christians and more learned than Rammohun Roy, proves the fallacy of Christianity. We Hindoos regard him in the same light as Christians do Hume, Voltaire, Gibbon and other sceptics.

Before "A Christian" indulged in a tirade about persons being "degraded by Asiatic effeminacy" he should have recollected that almost all the ancient prophets and patriarches venerated by Christians, nay even Jesus Christ himself, a Divine Incarnation and the founder of the Christian Faith, were Asiatics, so that if "A Christian" thinks it degrading to be born or to reside in Asia, he directly reflects upon them.

First : “A Christian” demands: “Will Ram Doss or his associates be pleased to inform me, if the Incarnation of his God was foretold by Prophets through a period of four thousand years” ? I answer in the affirmative. The Incarnation of Ram was foretold in the works of many holy and inspired men for more than 4,000 years previous to the event in the most precise and intelligible language; not in those ambiguous and equivocal terms found in the Old Testament, respecting the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, and ambiguity which it is well-known has afforded our common enemies, the Unitarians, a handle for raising a doubt of Jesus Christ being a real manifestation of God in the flesh.

Second : “A Christian” demands of Ram Doss : “Will he demonstrate his mission or Divine Incarnation of his deity by incontestable and stupendous miracles such as Christ wrought?” I answer, Yes. The divine Ram performed miracles more stupendous not before multitude of ignorant people only, but in the presence of Princes and of thousands of learned men, and of those who were inimical to Hindooism. I admit the Jains and other unbelievers ascribed Ram’s miraculous power to a Demoniactal Spirit, in the same manner as the Jews attributed the miracles of Jesus to the power of Baelzebub: but neither of these objections are worthy of notice from believers in Divine Incarnations, since the performance of the miracles themselves is incontestably proved by tradition.

Third : “A Christian” asks “Will he (Ram Doss) assert that the Doctrine of Hinduism is as pure and undefiled as that of Christianity?” Undoubtedly, such is my assertion : and an English translation of the Vedanta as well as of Munoo (which contains the essence of the whole Vedas) being before the public, I call on reflecting men to compare the two religions together and point out in what respect the one excels the other in purity ? Should the Christian attempt to claim the one excels the other in purity ? Should the Christian attempt to ridicule some part of the ritual of the Vedas I shall of course feel myself justified in referring to ceremonies of a similar character in the Christian Scripture ; and if he dwell on the corrupt notions introduced into Hindooism in more modern

times, I shall also remind him of the corruptions introduced by various sects into Christianity. But "A Christian" must know very well that such corruptions cannot detract from the excellence of genuine religions themselves.

Fourth : "A Christian" asks : "Will he (Ram Doss) prove that the human character has ever been exalted by any system of religion so much as by the sweet influence of Christianity." In reply, I appeal to History and call upon the Christian to mention any religion on the face of the earth that has been the cause of so much war and bloodshed, cruelty and oppression, for so many hundred years as this whose sweet influence he celebrates.

The propriety of conduct found among the better sort of Christians is entirely owing to the superior education they have enjoyed, a proof of which is that others of the same rank in society, although not believers in Christianity, are distinguished by equal propriety of conduct, which is not the case with the most firm believers, if destitute of Education or without the means of improvement by mixing in company with persons better instructed than themselves.

It is unjust for "A Christian" to quarrel with Hindoos because (he says) they cannot comprehend the sublime mystery of his Religion, since he is equally unable to comprehend the sublime mysteries of ours, and since both these mysteries equally transcend the human understanding, one cannot be preferred to the other.

Let us however return to the main question namely, the **Incarnation of the deity is the common basis of Hindooism and Christianity.** If the manifestation of God in the flesh is possible, such possibility cannot reasonably be confined to Judea or Ajodhya, for God has undoubtedly the power of manifesting himself in either country and of assuming any colour or name he pleases. If it is impossible, as our common enemies, the Unitarians contend, such impossibility must extend to all places and persons. I trust, therefore, "A Christian" will reflect with great seriousness on this subject and

will be kind enough to let me know the result.

I am, Sir, your most obedient servant
Calcutta, May 23, 1823. Ram Doss

Tytler being now, it appears, completely silenced, a friend, under the signature of "A Christian" came forward to his assistance in the following letter :

It is gratifying to the lovers of science to behold a few intelligent Hindoos emerging from the degraded ignorance and shameful supersition in which their fathers for so many centuries have been buried. It is no less pleasing to the friends of humanity to find that one of the most learned of the Hindoo Brahmans has not only abandoned the doctrine which countenance the cruel and abominable practice of matricide, but also ably confuted his compeers, who were advocates for having human victims sacrificed to Moloch.

On the other hand it is a sad contemplation that these very individuals who are indebted to Christianity for the civil liberty they enjoy, as well as for the rays of intelligence now beginning to dawn on them, should in the most ungenerous manner insult their benefactors by endeavouring to degrade their religion for no other reason because they cannot comprehend its sublime Mysteries.

My attention has been particularly attracted to this subject by a letter signed by Ram Doss which appeared in your paper of yesterday.

This Hindoo with whom I have no personal acquaintance had the arrogance to lay before the public the following passage : "I now call on the public to pronounce whether this query can be considered as a reply to the arguments contained in my letter forwarded to the Doctor repelling his offensive insinuations and proving that Hindooism and Christianity are founded on the same basis ?" Ram Doss here appeals to the public, and he will of course grant me the same privilege. I

will, therefore ask, Christian readers, are you so far degraded by Asiatic effiminacy as to behold with indifference your holy and immaculate religion thus degraded by having it placed on an equality with Hindooism, with rank idolatry, with disgraceful ignorance and shameful superstition ?

Will Ram Doss or his associates be pleased to inform me if the Incarnation of his God was foretold by prophets through a period of 4,000 years ? Or will he demonstrate the mission or Divine Incarnation of his Deity by incontestable and stupendous miracles such as Christ wrought ? Will he assert that the doctrine of Hindooism is as pure and undefiled as that of Christianity ? Or, in fine will he prove that the human character has ever been exalted by any religious system so much as by the sweet influences of Christianity ?

If Ram Doss is not able satisfactorily to clear up a single point of what I now submit to his serious consideration, it is manifested that in common civility he should refrain from insulting Christians by putting their religion on a comparison with Hindooism.

Rammohun Roy, who appears to me to be the most learned of the Hindoos, is so far from making such odious and offensive remarks that he apparently gives the preference to Christianity. Vide his *First Appeal* entitled *The Precepts of Christ, the Guide to Peace and Happiness*, I regret the learned Brahman was interrupted by the intemperate zeal of the Baptists in the praiseworthy course he intended to have pursued as set forth in his preface to the work above alluded to.

I conclude by recommending your sapient correspondent Ram Doss to employ his time and talents in laudable and pious endeavours to reclaim his countrymen from idolatry ather than attempt to investigate mysteries that are far above the weak comprehensions of man. I also recommend him to beware as such Christians as are carried away with every wind of doctrine, and who "know not what they do".

I am, Sir, Your Obedient servant
A Christian

Ram Doss, having heard nothing more publicly or privately from Dr Tytler or "A Christian", the correspondence here concluded, and the arguments adduced in vindication of the Incarnation of the deity as the common basis of Hindooism and Christianity consequently remained unanswered.

This controversy began on May 3 and ended on May 23, 1823. The whole was published in the form of a pamphlet on June 3 (indicated below) After the publication, the dispute was renewed, but this latter controversy (which was carried on in the *India Gazette* and the *Advertiser* from June 12 to 29, and was published in a pamphlet on June 14) we have thought fit not to publish, as it is composed only of some trifling letters. We have given below only the introduction by the Rajah to this second pamphlet :

After the foregoing pages had been issued from the press. Dr Tytler, evidently ashamed to confess his defeat, began again in the public prints to assign various excuses for his not having answered me. These, with the replies they called forth, are now collected together that the Public may be further enabled to appreciate the character and conduct of this reviler of Hindooism. Although the Doctor carried the correspondence from the Newspapers, where both parties might expect fair play and their communications to be inserted free of charge, to the "Advertiser" of his own publisher in which the arguments of his opponent could not find admission without payment; even under these unfavourable circumstances I continued the controversy, till Mr Chrichton, the Doctor's Publisher, refused to insert one of my communications sent him on Sunday the 29th June, on the groundless pretence that Dr. Tytler had left Calcutta and therefore could not answer it; this collusion between him and his Publisher, instead of enabling him to retreat with honour, will only render his final discomfiture the more inglorious.

Calcutta, July 14, 1823.

Ram Doss.

Fellow-believers, the above correspondence between the renowned Dr. R. Tytler and myself was partly given to the world through the medium of the *Bengal Hurkaru* but as the Editor of that Paper refused to admit some of my letters into its pages, and those published were widely separated from each other, being mixed up with various extraneous matters, I have deemed it advisable to have the whole collected together and presented at one view for general edification.

My object in addressing Dr Tytler, as will be seen from a perusal of the above pages, was that all believers in the manifestation of God in the flesh, whether Hindoo or Christian, might unite in support of our common cause, and cordially co-operate in our endeavours to check the alarming growth of the Unitarian heresy; but unfortunately my hopes were entirely disappointed as Dr Tytler not only refused to repair the breach I conceived his writings calculated to make but to my great surprise and regret, in return for my friendly offers of assistance, he applied to me and to my religion the most opprobrious abuse and treated me as if my faith were inimical to the tenets of his creed.

I am, your friend and fellow-believer,
Ram Doss

Calcutta, June 3, 1823

Note : It is believed that Dr Tytler was a reputed and learned scholar of that time who taught Radhakanta Sikdar.

Atmiya Sabha—Calcutta Unitarian Association—British Indian Unitarian Association

Atmiya Sabha

RAMMOHUN returned to Calcutta at the end of 1815 and started the Atmiya Sabha in 1816 as an association of persons with liberal views and like minds whose aim was to reform society by purging it of all unreasonable and undesirable practices and beliefs. There was only a handful of members of whom David Hare was one. The Sabha discussed social, religious and educational and other matters which affected its members' lives directly or indirectly.

Unitarianism

A little later, a group led by Rev. Adam and Rammohun stressed Unitarianism among Christians rejecting Trinitarianism. Unitarianism may be described as unity of Godhead as distinct from the concept of Trinity : God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Besides Unity of Godhead, there is no special set of beliefs which officially bind a Unitarian. There is no special creed to which he must subscribe, all that is expected of him being adherence to good faith and morals and service to mankind. Members of the Unitarian Church are bound by strong community feeling and dedicate themselves to service, love of truth and to the spirit of Christ as

wholeheartedly as the Trinitarians do. They do not believe in any intermediary for salvation and regard Christ as the highest spiritual authority whereas the Trinitarians go much further than spiritual authority, believing that the Holy Spirit is essential for human salvation. The Unitarians combine a high sense of humanism with full freedom in all social affairs whereas Trinitarians are largely bound by church injunctions, though in respect of humanism their faith in man and in his fulfilment is in no way less intense.

The objects for which the Unitarian Committee was founded were described thus in a letter by its secretary :

“The primary object of the committee may be briefly described to be the promotion in British India of the knowledge, belief, and practice of the principles of Unitarian Christianity, as that form of our religion is in their judgement most consistent with the will of its Inspired Founder, and best adopted to secure the improvement and happiness of those by whom it is cordially embraced. The plans which they propose to follow for the attainment of this object, will hereafter more particularly appear. I only remark in this place, that they are not tempted to the direct means for the propagation of Christianity. History, science, and philosophy, the committee regard as the handmaids of true religion; and whatever, therefore, has a tendency to diffuse the benefits of education, to destroy ignorance and superstition, bigotry and fanaticism, to raise the standard of intellect, to purify the theories of morals, and to promote universal charity and practical benevolence, although not in immediate connexion with Christianity, will be considered by them as within the scope of their design.....”

The Calcutta Unitarian Association

This association was formed in 1821 and its office was adjacent to that of *Bengal Hurkara*. It received the wholehearted cooperation of Rev. Adam. The association was based essentially on Christian thought. From the proceedings of the body the following appear to have been associated with it :

Theodore Dickins, a barrister of the Supreme Court, George James Gordon, a merchant of the firm of Mackintosh & Co., William Tate, an attorney, B.W. Macleod, a surgeon in the Company's service, Norman Kerr, an uncovenanted servant of the Company, Rammohun Roy, Dwarkanath Thakoor, Prusunna Coomar Thakoor, Radhaprasad Roy, Tarachand Chakrabortty, Sutherland and William Adam.....

The Atmiya Sabha and the Unitarian Association functioned upto 1823, but from 1824, their activities were much disturbed by Rammohun's preoccupations and as a matter of fact, the association almost ceased activity for some time. From about 1826, when the disturbing factors, particularly the litigation against Radhaprasad, disappeared, the Sabha seems to have merged with the Association. This merger was inevitable because the Sabha was almost moribund due to Rammohun's non-participation. At this time the atmosphere in which Radhaprasad and Rammohun lived was so vitiated by the hostile activities of their opponents that one Col. Young of the East India Company wrote as follows to Jeremy Bentham :

"Rammohun has been occupied in defending himself and his son against a bitter and virulent persecution which has been got up against the latter nominally---but against himself and his abhorred opinions in reality---by a conspiracy of his own bigoted countrymen, protected and encouraged, not to say instigated, by some of ours---influential and official men who cannot endure that a presumptuous "Black man" should tread closely upon the march of mind."

British Indian Unitarian Association

At the instance of Rammohun, the Calcutta Unitarian Association changed its designation to British Indian Unitarian Association. This body was organised to emphasise closer association between like-minded Indians and Europeans. It had the express object of stressing belief in the unity of godhead for Christians and the same in some other way for Hindus. It propagated that Jesus was not a divinity but had a divine

mission and impressed on the Hindus that worship of God suffered in idolatry and through belief in multiplicity of deities. Thus, according to Rammohun, Trinitarianism amounted to Polytheism, and on that plane, the mind could hardly concentrate on the Supreme Being. As founder and head of this organisation in India, Rammohun kept touch with other Unitarians in Britain and America and other countries. A true estimate of Rammohun may be made from a letter he wrote in October 1822 to a citizen of Baltimore. It runs thus :

“I have now every reason to hope that the truths of Christianity will not be much longer kept hidden under the veil of heathen doctrines and practices, gradually introduced among the followers of Christ, since many lovers of truth are zealously engaged in rendering the religion of Jesus free from corruptions

It is.....a great satisfaction to my conscience to find that the doctrines inculcated by Jesus and his worthy Apostles are quite different from those human inventions which the missionaries are persuaded to profess, and entirely consistent with reason and the revelation delivered by Moses and the prophets. I am, therefore, anxious to support them, even at the risk of my own life. I rely much on the force of truth, which will, I am sure, ultimately prevail. Our number is comparatively small, but I am glad to inform you that none of them can be justly charged with the want of zeal and prudence.

I wish to add, in order that you may set me right, if you find me mistaken, my view of Christianity is that in representing all mankind as the children of one eternal Father, it enjoins them to love one another, without making any distinction of country, caste, colour, or creed; notwithstanding they may be justified in the sight of the Creator in manifesting their respect towards each other, according to the propriety of their actions and the reasonableness of their religious opinions and differences.”

Rammohun's next letter, written in December, the same year to the same person is equally refreshing, convincing and optimistic about Christ's mission. He wrote :

“Although our adversaries are both numerous and zealous, as the adversaries of truth always have been, yet our prospects are by no means discouraging. If we only have the means of following up what has already been done ”

The above shows Rammohun's zeal in bringing Christ's ethical principles into full operation among the Indian people. He always thought that while Hinduism stressed the highest and purest thoughts on the Supreme Being, Christianity set a very high standard of ethical virtues for man. These apart, Rammohun strenuously laboured to emphasise Unitarianism in both Hinduism and Christianity.

The Rammohun-Marshman controversy brought Rammohun to the forefront of the Christian world, and he held his position very successfully with his deep insight into scriptural texts, sympathetic understanding of his adversary's stand and masterly presentation of his case. He showed versatility in polemical combat with the help of a wide study of all relevant subject matter. His acquaintance with important languages lent him strength of conviction. All his efforts centred on Unitarianism and the unity of godhead as expressed in the Hindu as well as in the Christian scriptures. In every possible way he and his follower Adam busied themselves in propagating belief in this unity against Trinitarianism and plurality of deities. The committee also worked hard in this cause.

To educate the common man in this Rammohun placed upon Adam the duty of conducting morning divine service in English, but when this was not found popular, Adam tried evening services, but here too he failed to attract many but did not lose patience and continued his efforts, in the vicinity of the Anglo-Hindu School. All this was done under the broad-based British Indian Unitarian Association. As the response was however still poor, Adam suggested that he should shift his activities to Madras.¹ But Rammohun did not agree on the ground that funds would not permit this. When Adam found that he was without substantial work in Calcutta he applied himself to the work of the Anglo-Hindu

School, where too, he found Rammohun unfavourable to him. It was not really understandable why Rammohun should have become indifferent, nay harsh, in his dealings with Adam. We have no means to find justification for this attitude. If the public response to Unitarianism was poor, this was not the fault of Adam, who had been straining in every way to attain positive results. A practical man like Rammohun should have recognised the facts. Yet in spite of this apparent indifference to Adam, Rammohun was, at the same time, making provision in his Will for Adam's family, as a mark of friendship. From all this, one may reasonably conclude that Rammohun's disappointment at Adam's repeated failures made him depressed, and this mood was reflected in his behaviour towards Adam. Rammohun's apparent displeasure was nothing but a sign of his mental perturbation. No other explanation seems sufficient. If this reading is incorrect then here is a clear failure of justice on the part of Rammohun.

About this time Rammohun was engaged with Adam in translating the 'Sermon on the Mount' into Sanskrit, but no copy of this translation is available. There however exists a small tract called *Answer of a Hindu to the Question : Why Do You Frequent a Unitarian Place of Worship Instead of the Numerously Attended Established Church?* This tract was printed in the name of Chandrasekhar Dev, a constant companion of Rammohun, but was in fact written by Rammohun himself. Rammohun adopted a similar course in several other instances, ostensibly to give greater emphasis to his message. The gist of the tract was that he did not like to go to a church where he would have to hear such things as he had already rejected, namely Incarnation, Atonement, Trinity among others.

Adam's failure to interest the general public in Unitarianism filled both Rammohun and him with gloom. Adam gave intense thought to this matter and both searched for a solution, feeling that if the religious fervour brought out in public gatherings was not canalised the good effect of the sermon would be frittered away. As a result of deep thinking, both of them came to the same conclusion, but Adam expressed it in one way while Rammohun in another.

Adam's finding is clear from a letter that he wrote to John Bowring in London in February 1828 :

"I must add, before I conclude, that I am endeavouring to get the Hindu Unitarians in Calcutta to unite in forming an Association auxiliary to the British Indian Association, and for the establishment of the public worship of One God among themselves, for the printing of tracts and for the diffusion of religious knowledge generally among their countrymen. To prevent prejudice from being excited, it will be necessary to keep Christianity out of view at present in connection with this auxiliary, but it will really be (what it perhaps may not be nominally) an auxiliary to our views, and a highly valuable one too, if I can succeed in creating the necessary degree of interest to begin and carry on."

Adam thus stressed two points--the association should be an auxiliary of the British Indian Unitarian Association, and Christianity be kept out of view for the time being.

But what actually passed at the meeting of sympathisers was referred to in Adam's letter of January 1829 to Dr Tuckerman :

"There has accordingly been formed a Hindu Unitarian Association, the object of which is, however, strictly Hindu and not Christian, i.e., to teach and practise the worship of only one God on the basis of the divine authority of the Vedas, and not of the Christian scriptures. This is a basis of which I have distinctly informed Rammohun and my other friends that I cannot approve."

Adam disliked the idea of a closed body based on the divine authority of the Vedas. True, Rammohun saw and appreciated Adam's position, but while he arrived at the same conclusion, Rammohun did not like to interfere with the resolution quoted above lest too much emphasis on either Hinduism or Christianity might vitiate the main aim, which was the assimilation of the sermon. Rammohun had already hit upon his plan of action, and when the resolution was placed before him, he thought that he should allow this to be established for the moment. He

accordingly approved the formation of the Brohmo Samaj. All these events occurred in early 1828, and Adam's letter to Bowring referred to the earlier discussions. Thus it is clear that Adam was unhappy at the preamble leading to the formation of the Brohmo Samaj. But Rammohun's plan came to be realised substantially, and this gave him some relief. Adam was not happy because it was not auxiliary to the British Indian Unitarian body and was specifically based on the Vedas. In spite of this position, he was glad in a way that the reformed Hindus had accepted their original monotheism, and to that end idolatry was eliminated.

Curiously enough, at this very time a suggestion came from Chandrasekhar Dev that they needed their own place of worship. This came at a time when in the British India Unitarian Association, both Rammohun and Adam were anxious to canalise religious sentiments into monotheism on a common basis. This was the inception of the idea of a prayer hall for reformed Hindus who believed in one God and who had given up idolatry.

Rammohun for a Common Prayer Hall

Rammohun was in search of a convenient plot of land where the Brohmo Samaj (previously known as Brohmo Sabha) would be established. A plot was purchased on Chitpur Road in June 1829 for its permanent abode. The document of purchase bore the name Brohmo Samaj, and the purchase was made by five persons : Rammohun Roy, Dwarkanath Tagore, Prasanno kumar Tagore, Kalinath Roy and Ram Chandra Vidyabagis. After the building was constructed, the ownership of the premises was conveyed by deed to three trustees in January 1830, Ramnath Tagore, Baikunthanath Roy and Radhaprasad Roy. The inauguration of the building took place in 1830 in the presence of about 300 persons almost exclusively Hindus. The Trust Deed contained the following :

“A place of public meeting of all sorts and descriptions of people without distinction as shall behave and conduct themselves in an orderly sober religious. devout manner for the worship and adoration of the Eternal Unsearchable and Immutable Being who is the Author and Preserver

of the Universe but not under or by any other name, designation or title peculiarly used for and applied to any other particular Being or Being by any man or set of men whatsoever and that no graven image, statue or sculpture, carving, painting, picture portrait or the likeness of anything shall be admitted within the said messuages, building, land, tenements, hereditaments and premises and that no sacrifice, offering or oblation of any kind or thing shall ever be permitted therein, and that no animal or living creature shall within or on the said message, building, land, tenements, hereditaments and premises be deprived of life whether for religious purposes or for food and that no eating or drinking (except such as shall be necessary by any accident for the preservation of life) feasting or rioting be permitted therein or thereon, and that in conducting the said worship and adoration no object, animate or inanimate, that has been or is or shall hereafter become or be recognised as an object of worship by any man or set of men shall be reviled or slightly or contemptuously spoken of or alluded to either in preaching or praying or in the hymn or other mode of worship that may be delivered or used in the said Message or Building, and that no sermon, preaching, discourse, prayer or hymn be delivered, made or used in such worship but such as have a tendency to the promotion of charity, morality, piety, benevolence, virtue and the strengthening of the bonds of union, Between men of all religious persuasions and creeds."

Needless to mention, Rammohun did not believe in the divine authority of the Gospel, just as he did not believe in the divine authority of the Vedas. Further, it may be said that Adam could make out no special point because the main idea of all religions must be to establish a pure and just notion of God, and if the basic idea of Unitarian concept had been promoted, that itself was a fulfilment of Unitarianism.

Thus the abstract Unitarianism covered all in a pure theism. The prayer hall became a popular resort for enlightened Hindus who happily took part in the simple worship, along with non-Hindus who joined in the devotional worship.

They gave up idol-worship and remained true Hindus as the highest Sastras provide. This of course did not mean that Ram-mohun gave up close association with bigoted Hindus. It only meant that he remained steadfast to his own conviction, leaving others to follow, hoping that in course of time thinking would grow more robust on closer association with these new worshippers.

He attended the Mandir very regularly and joined the upasana with religious fervour and deep concentration. To that he added silent meditation which must have been that of an Unitarian. With this happy consummation of his efforts extending over a period of ten years (from the formation of the Unitarian Committee), he felt the highest relief by giving a form to his ideas though it fell much short of his ideal.

In this connection, it will be quite appropriate to quote Mahadev Govind Ranade, the illustrious savant of Bombay :

“The spirituality, the deep piety and universal toleration which are manifest in every word of the Trust Deed of the Brahmo Samaj represent an ideal of beauty and perfection which...it may yet take many centuries before its full significance is understood by our people...What Raja Ram-mohun felt was that we had in India a nation gifted with a religious history transcending all the records of every other race. Here was a nation which was gifted, was well endowed, was spiritual in all its real aspirations. This nation had gradually ascended to the conception of the purest form of Monotheism that the world has yet seen not by the command of any single prophet, but by the slow process of growth and evolution...a system of the purest form of Monotheism that man can conceive. The higher thought of the nation had learned to place its trust in a universal spirit, the one without a second, in whom all lived and moved and had their being, who was the cause of all, the lord of all, the friend of all, the guide of all, the most fatherly of fathers, and the most motherly of mothers. One age after another constructed the edifice, laying brick upon brick and layer upon layer, and storey after storey rose. Well, this highest conception was not only confined to

Pandits, philosophers and sastris, but it was the common property to every class. The very lowest of the low, men who were socially not much respected, nor very respectable the villager, the hunter, the gardener, the fisherman, the weaver, the goldsmith, the barber, the shopkeeper...they all shared this common faith equally with the Brahmins, the pandits and the yogis.” (Mahadev Govind Ranade *Religious and Social Reform*, a collection of essays compiled by Kolasker, Bombay, 1902)

A New Life in Atmiya Sabha known as Brohmo Sabha

The first sitting of the Brohmo Sabha took place on Wednesday (August 20, 1828). At that time, the temple on Chitpur Road, as a common prayer hall, had not been built, Adam gives the description of the prayer meeting every Saturday evening between 7 P.M. and 9 P.M. and his words run as follows :

“The service begins with two or three of the pandits singing, or rather chanting in the cathedral style, some of the spiritual portions of the Ved, which are next explained in the vernacular dialect to the people by another pandit. This is followed by a discourse in Bengali...and the whole is concluded by hymns both in Sanskrit and Bengali, sung with the voice and accompanied by instrumental music, which is also occasionally interposed between other parts of the service. The audience consists generally of from 50 to 60 individuals, several pandits, a good many Brahmins and all decent and attentive in their demeanours.”

The first item in the weekly meeting of the Samaj was a sermon delivered by the minister from a separate room so that the Vedas may not be desecrated by the presence of non-brahmins. Two Telugu brahmins recited the Vedas. Utsavananda Vidyabagish read the Upanishads, Ramchandra Vidyabagish explained them in Bengali. Tarachand Chakrabarty acted as the secretary of the Samaj.

Thus the liberal Hindus of advanced thinking believing in one God and not necessarily believing in Advaitism formed a

group. Rammohun brought this group, an anti-idolatry group consisting of enlightened Hindus under one liberal Church with Advaitism as their ultimate goal. This group was wholly opposed to idolatrous rites and practices, some of them striving for higher speculations and others thinking as ordinary devotees of one God. This meant parting with Adam who was essentially aiming higher. Rammohun's satisfaction was substantial since a large social victory had been achieved, a large section rescued and another section unhinged from their old beliefs. Adam however felt that he was left high and dry. But he must also have realised that Rammohun was with him though he started this liberal group with all benedictions. Adam felt more and more isolated but still spoke with restraint :

“Rammohun Roy, I am persuaded, supports this institution, not because he believes in the divine authority of the Vedas but solely as an instrument of overthrowing idolatry. To be candid, however, I must add that the conviction has lately gained ground in my mind that he employs Unitarian Christianity in the same way, as an instrument for spreading pure and just notions of God, without believing in the divine authority of the Gospel.”

(Brohmo) “Samaj”?

There is a belief strongly held by many that Rammohun did not intend to make a Brohmo community. True, he had no such intention, for he appealed in various ways to the entire Hindu community of the country to change the polytheistic practices and adopt monotheism, the religion of the ancients (it was only the lower strata which took to idol-worship). Despite 15 years of unrelenting effort his appeal got a strong response from some, indistinct response from many and a stiff indifference from the vast majority who were mechanical. At long last towards 1827-28 he and Adam began to get to groups of people who slowly began to respond to monotheism. When this group came nearer, he desired it to congregate regularly, and it came to be known as Brohmo Samaj, specially when it met in the prayer hall at Chitpur Road. It is true that there is no mention of the name “Brohmo Samaj” in the Trust

Deed as inscribed in Kamal Bose's house on Chitpur Road, but that Rammohun used to call his followers as members of Brohmo Samaj is corroborated by the fact that when the second Brohmo prayer-hall was established at Telinipara by Anandaprasad Bandopadhyaya, it was called Telinipara Brohmo Samaj. Hence the original organisation must have borne the same name . . . Brohmo Samaj.

Although the Trust Deed did not contain the appellation Samaj, still, the *Kabuliyat* contained the words "for the Brohmo Samaj". This shows that the expression was not a taboo with Rammohun. All he wanted was not to set up this group of Brohmo-worshippers as a sect because his appeal was to the Hindus in general and it was by way of reformation. He wanted only that this group of people among the Hindus should be worshippers of one (Brohmo) and should set themselves against idolatry. The Jorasanko Mandir was ordinarily called Brahmo-Samaj Mandir. Strictly speaking, Rammohun, by Brohmo "Samaj", meant Brohmo "mandali".

NOTE

1. "It is very remarkable that while the great doctrine of the unity and unrivalled supremacy of God is thus gradually working its way among the poorer classes of natives in the vicinity of Madras, it is at the same time making triumphant progress among the higher castes of Hindus in the great and populous city of Calcutta. Rammohun Roy, a learned, eloquent and opulent Brahman, having by the proper exercise of his own understanding discovered the folly and absurdity of the Hindu mythology and of idol worship, was led by conscientious sense of duty to proclaim this important discovery to his countrymen, and has publicly taught the doctrine of the divine unity and perfection to the native Hindus and has entered his protest against their impious, barbarous and idolatrous rites. Such a doctrine from a person of such exalted rank, at first excited great astonishment and gave infinite offence. But by degrees, the courage eloquence and perseverance of this extraordinary man prevailed over all opposition and it is said that many hundreds of the native Hindus, and especially of the young people, have embraced his doctrine". (William Roberts)

Missionaries' Attacks on Hindu Scriptures

A letter appeared in *Samachar Durpan*, a weekly published from the Baptist Mission Press at Serampore, on 14th July, 1821, in which the writer asked some questions regarding the doctrines of the *Vedanta*, *Nyaya Mimansa* and *Samkhya*, implying that there were many inconsistencies in these sastras. These provoked Rammohun to write a reply, but the paper did not publish it which led him to start a magazine called the *Brahminical Magazine* in English and *Brahman Sebadhi* in Bengali. The charges of the missionaries and the replies of Rammohun are given in the Explanatory Note below.

Brahminical Magazine

A prefatory note to the first issue of Magazine in 1821 says :
 “For a period of upwards of fifty years, this country Bengal has been in exclusive possession of the English nation; during the first thirty years of which from their word and deed, it was universally believed that they would not interfere with the religion of their subjects, and that they truly wished every man to act in such matters according to the dictates of his own conscience. Their possessions in Hindoostan and their political strength have, through the grace of God, gradually increased. But during the last twenty years, a body of English gentlemen who are called missionaries,

have been publicly endeavouring, in several ways to convert Hindoos and Mussulmans of this country to Christianity... It seems almost natural that when one nation succeeds in conquering another, the former, though their religion may be quite ridiculous, laugh at and despise the religion and manners of those that are fallen into their power. For example, Mussulmans, upon their conquest of India, proved highly inimical to the religious exercises of Hindoos. When the generals of Chengezkhan, who denied God and were wild beasts in their manners, invaded the western part of Hindoostan, they universally mocked at the profession of God and of futurity expressed to them by the natives of India. The savages of Arracan, on their invasion of the eastern part of Bengal, always attempted to degrade the religion of Hindoos. In ancient days, the Greeks and the Romans, who were gross idolators and immoral in their lives, used to laugh at the religion and conduct of their Jewish subjects, a sect who were devoted to the belief of one God. It is therefore not uncommon if the English missionaries, who are of the conquerors of this country, revile and mock at the religion of its natives. But as the English are celebrated for the manifestation of humanity and for administering justice, and as a great many gentlemen among them are noticed to have had an aversion to violate equity, it would tend to destroy the acknowledged character if they follow the example of the former savage conquerors in disturbing the established religion of the country; because to introduce a religion by means of abuse and insult, or by affording the hope of worldly gain, is inconsistent with the reason and justice."

The preface to the second issue contains these remarks by Rammohun :

"In the first number of the Magazine I replied to the arguments they adduced against the Sastras, or immediate explanations of the Vedas, our original Sacred Books; and in the second, I answered the objections urged against the Puranas and Tantras, or Historical illustrations of the Hindoo Mythology...

In conclusion, I beg to ask every candid and reflecting

reader : Whether a man be placed on an imperial throne, or sit in the dust...whether he be lord of the whole known world, or one destitute of even a hut ..the commander of millions, or without a single follower...whether he be intimately acquainted with all human learning, or ignorant of letters .. whether he be ruddy and handsome, or dark and deformed .. yet if, while he declares that God is not man, he again professes to believe in a God-man or man-God, under whatever sophistry the idea may be sheltered, can such a person have a just claim to enjoy respect in the intellectual world? and does he not expose himself to censure, should he, at the same time, ascribe unreasonableness to others ?”

The letter published in *Samachar Durpan* of July 14, 1821 made the following points regarding Hindu religious concepts :

1. That from Vedanta it appears that God is one, eternal, unlimited by past, present or future, without form, beyond the comprehension of the senses, void of desire, pure intellect, without defect and perfect in every respect, and the soul is not different from Him, nor is there any other real existence besides him.

The visible world is created by Maya alone, and that Maya is opposed to true knowledge of God, (i) if the soul be the same as God, nothing can justify the belief that the soul is liable to be rewarded and punished according to good or evil works, (ii) the perfection of God and His sufficiency cannot be maintained.

2. That in the Nyaya Sastra, God is one and souls are many, but they are both imperishable.

3. That in Mimansa Sastra, wonderful consequences of the various sacrificial rites, consisting of incantations, etc., leading to *Apurva* are synonymous with the highest bliss.

4. That in Samkhya Sastra, Prakriti(Nature) with Purusha are operating jointly like two halves of a grain of vetch, etc.

In brief, the contention of the missionaries may be put thus:

“In the Vedanta it is said God is one and eternal, and the soul is not different from Him. The visible world is created by Maya, and this is opposed to true knowledge of God. The existence of the world and consciousness is therefore due to the ignorance of the nature of God. If the truth of these doctrines is admitted, then God is not what he is represented to be, or both God and Maya are supreme in the universe. *Secondly*, if soul be the same as God, then the idea of reward or punishment for good or evil deeds cannot arise. Moreover, these doctrines deny perfection to God. *Thirdly*, if God is influenced by Maya in the creation of the world, how can the doctrine of his perfection be maintained? Nyaya Sastra, on the other hand, maintains that God is one and the souls are various and they both are imperishable. Besides, space, position, time and atoms are eternal. Does not this doctrine destroy the unity of God? In the Mimansa Sastra again the consequences of the sacrificial rites are God. How can we call God the consequences of the rites produced by men? The Samkhya Sastra admits that nature and the God of nature are operating jointly, but the latter is invisible. Does not this suggest the duality of God?”

Rammohun felt that these questions were put without understanding the implications involved and without knowing the fundamentals on which Samkhya philosophy and Vedanta philosophy stand. To understand Samkhya's Purusha and Prakriti and Vedanta's Brohmo and Mayabad, one should have the grounding of Nyaya philosophy and of certain basic Hindu concepts. All these mean intensive study and proper analysis. These are difficult even for an Indian who is familiar with Hindu concepts,...they are more difficult for non-Indians whose traditions are quite different. Rammohun however took up the subject in a general way and replied as follows :

“The world, as the Vedanta says, is the effect of maya, and is material; but God is mere spirit, whose particular influences being shed upon certain material objects are called souls in the same manner as the reflections of the sun are seen on water placed in various vessels. As these reflections of the sun seem to be moved by the motion of the water of those vessels,

without effecting any motion in the sun, so souls, being as it were, the reflections of the Supreme Spirit on matter, seem to be affected by the circumstances that influence matter, without God being affected by such circumstances. As some reflections are bright from the purity of the water on which they are cast, while others seem obscure owing to its foulness, so some souls are more pure from the purity of the matter with which they are connected, while others are dull owing to the dullness of matter.

As the reflections of the sun, though without light proper to themselves, appear splendid from their connection with the illuminating sun, so the soul, though not true intellect, seems intellectual and acts as if it were real spirit from its actual relation to the universal intellect ; and as from the particular relations of the sun to the water placed in different pots, various reflections appear resembling the same sun in nature and differing from it in qualities; and again as these cease to appear on the removal of the water, so through the peculiar relations of various material objects to one Supreme Spirit numerous souls appear and seem as performing good and evil works, and also receiving their consequences; and as soon as that relation ceases, they at that very minute, cease to appear distinctly from their original. Hence God is one, and the soul, although it is not in fact of a different origin from God, is yet liable to experience the consequences of good and evil works, but this liability of the soul to reward or punishment cannot render God liable to either...We find the phrase "God is all and in all" in the Christian books; and I suppose they do not mean by such words that pots, mats, etc., are god. I am inclined to believe that by these terms, they mean the omnipresence of God. Why do you attempt by cavils, to find fault with the Vedanta?" .

Rammohun continued :

"Every professor of any theistical system, such as the followers of the Nyaya doctrines, and those of Christianity believe that God is not perishable, and that the soul has no

end. The soul, during an endless period, either enjoys the beatitude procured by an acquisition of knowledge of God, or receives the consequences of works. In like manner, they both believe that it is only God that bestows on the soul the consequences of its good and evil actions and that the Will of God is immutable. If any fault can be found with these doctrines, then the system of Nyaya and of Christianity both must be equally subject to it; for both systems maintain these doctrines.”

Regarding Mimamsa, Rammohun wrote elaborately among which the following excerpt may be quoted :

“...However, the followers of the Mimamsa are of two classes : one does not carry their view further than the performance of rites, and they are reckoned among atheists; another sect professes the existence of God, but they say that the reward or punishment which we experience is the consequence of our works, to which God is quite neutral...”

Regarding Yoga, Rammohun wrote :

“...It is declared in the Patanjali that through means of Yoga men may surmount all the distress and grievances of the world whereby he may enjoy beatitude, and that God is pure and beyond the apprehension of the senses and is the superintendent of the universe. I am therefore at a loss to know upon what ground you have placed the Patanjali on a level with the Mimamsa.”

The second number of the *Brahminical Magazine* carried a translation of an extract from the letter purporting to show the unreasonableness of the sastras, which had appeared in *Sama-char Durpan*. This letter of the missionaries, relates to worship of God under various names and forms as in the Puranas and Tantras. Regarding their comments on these writings, Rammohun wrote :

‘The Puranas, etc., agreeable to the Vedanta represent God in every way as incomprehensible and without form. There is moreover, this in the Puranas, that lest persons of feeble intellect unable to comprehend God as not subject to the senses and without form, should either pass their life with-

out any religious duties whatsoever or should engage—work—to prevent this, they have represented God in the form of a man and other animals and as possessed of all those desires with which we are conversant...”

Rammohun continued :

“.....that whatever book opposes the Vedas is destitute of authority. ‘All Smritis which are contrary to the Veda, and all atheistical works, are not conducive to future happiness : they dwell in darkness.’ (Manu)

Rammohun further said :

“With a view to improve the errors of the Puranas and Tantras, you say that the Puranas represent God as possessed of various names and forms, as possessed of a wife and children, and as subject to the senses, and to the discharge of bodily functions; from which it follows that there are many gods, that they are subject to sensual pleasure, and the omnipresence of God cannot be maintained. I therefore humbly ask the missionary gentlemen, whether or not they call Jesus Christ, who is possessed of the human form and also the Holy Ghost, who is possessed of the dove shape, the very God ? (1) And whether they do not consider that Jesus Christ, the very God, received impression by the external organs, eyes, etc, and operated by means of the active organs, hands, etc. And whether or not they consider him as subject to all the human passions? Was he angry or not ? (2) Was his mind affected or not ?...”

In the third number of the Magazine, Rammohun took up and examined the replies that the missionaries gave to his questions. He contended that his conclusions reasonably followed from the following :

“They call Jesus Christ the son of God and the very God—how can the son be the very father ? The Editor denies the accuracy of the information on which I found this question, and firmly asserts that “the Bible nowhere says that the son is the father.” I, therefore, deem necessary to show my reason for the above query, leaving it to the public to pronounce on the justifiableness of it either in their conversa-

tion or religious publications. All Christian teachers profess that God is one and that Jesus Christ is the son of God. Hence I naturally concluded that they believe the son to be the father, and consequently questioned the reasonableness of such a doctrine."

He ended with this appeal in the same number :

"As to the abusive terms made use of by the Editor, such as 'Father of lies alone to whom it (Hindooism) evidently owes its origin,' 'Impure fables of his false gods,' 'Pretended gods of Hindoos', etc, common decency prevents me from making use of similar terms in return. We must recollect that we have engaged in solemn religious controversy and not in retorting abuse against each other.

We are conversant whereby they may have some regard to Divine Being. Afterwards by diligent endeavours they become qualified for the true knowledge of God : but over and over again the Puranas have carefully affirmed, that they have given this account of the forms of God with a view to the benefit of persons of weak minds, and that in truth God is without name, form, organs, and sensual enjoyment...A commonly received rule for ascertaining the authority of any books is this, that whatever book opposes the Veda, is destitute of authority. 'All Smritis which are contrary to the Veda and all atheistical works are not conducive to future happiness ; they dwell in darkness.' (Manu).....I have now written what I intended, respecting the errors which, as contrary to reason, you have stated to be in the Hindoo Sastras."

In the same third number of the *Brahminical Magazine* the following also appeared :

"In the *Friend of India*, No. 38, a reply has been made in English to the second number of the *Brahminical Magazine* composed both in English and Bengali and published a few weeks ago. As the controversy in question is intended by both parties chiefly for the benefit of the Hindoo community and secondarily for the use of Europeans, I feel much disappointed in my expectation of being favoured

by the editor of his colleagues with a reply in English and Bengali to insert in the next number of my magazine. I, however, must receive it, as it is, and beg to be allowed to make a few remarks on the reply."

In this issue, Rammohun put several questions to the missionaries for clarification in order to arrive at a rational conclusion. It would not be wrong to say that a reasonable conclusion was not attainable. It has to be admitted that Rammohun had tried to argue that the missionaries and believers in Christian doctrines and dogmas, however much they might try, would not be able to avoid being pushed into a tight corner. This was Rammohun's position, for just as in Hinduism there have been many unreasonable and irrational things (in many cases absurd to the extreme), so also in the case of Christianity, whose antiquity is unquestioned, there have been many similar manifestations. Just as Rammohun strongly opposed irrational Hindu practices and beliefs, so he opposed them also in Christianity.

Trinitarianism

Coming specifically to the question of the Trinity, Rammohun, a strong Unitarian, failed to appreciate the arguments in favour of Trinitarianism as a basic faith. Since Rammohun's Hindu sastras had been strongly criticised by the Trinitarians and ridiculed as full of absurdities not based on reason he hit back in the same terms pointing out the irrational beliefs and practices, which the Trinitarians adopted in the worship of Jesus. Apart from worship which is a matter of only faith, what struck him as grossly untenable was the background of the entire conception of Christ's nativity and the position of the entire belief as has come down to us in such a crude form that what is afterwards written, is intended to ascertain how far their doctrines are agreeable to reason.

"They call Jesus Christ the Son of God and the very God. How can the son be the very Father ?

They sometime call Jesus Christ the Son of man, and yet

say no man was his Father.

They say that God is one, and yet say that the Father is God, the Son is God and the Holy Ghost is God.

They say that God must be worshipped in spirit and yet they worship Jesus Christ as the very God, although he is possessed of a material body.

They say that the Son is of the same essence and existence as the Father, and they also say that the Son is equal to the Father. But how can equality subsist except between objects possessed of different essence and existence ?”

Rammohun further pointed out the excesses of Trinitarianism as stepping into polytheism.

“The Editor says that the Father, Son and Holy Ghost are also described in scriptures, as equally giving grace and peace to men, as pardoning sin and leading men in the paths of “righteousness, which things omniscience, omnipotence, infinite love and mercy can alone perform.” I do not know any polytheistical system more clear than this description of the Editor as declaring three Beings equally omniscient, omnipotent, and possessed of infinite mercy. I, however, beg to ask, whether the omnipotence, omniscience and infinite mercy of one person is sufficient or not to arrange the universal system and preserve its harmony ? If so, an admission of the omnipotence and omniscience of the second and the third is superfluous and absurd; but if not sufficient, why should he stop at the number three and not carry on the numeration until the number of omnipotent Beings becomes at least equal to that of the heavenly bodies, ascribing to each the management of every globe.”

The Editor tried to meet the points and again Rammohun replied, under the pseudonym “Sivaprasad Sarma”, to the missionaries :

“The Editor has given an evasive answer; for he says,

Christians worship Jesus Christ and not his body separately from him. I never charged Christians in my question with worshipping the body of Jesus Christ separately from himself, that the Editor could be justified in denying Christians having worshipped him and not his body. The Editor in fact confesses their adoration of Jesus Christ as the very God in the material form : nevertheless he attempts to maintain that they worship God in spirit. If we admit that the worship of spirit possessed of material body is worship of spirit, we must not any longer impute idolatry to any religious sect, for none of them adore mere matter unconnected with spirit. Did the Greeks and Romans worship the bodies of Jupiter and Juno and their other supposed gods separately from their respective spirits? Are not the miraculous works ascribed by them to these gods, proofs of their viewing them as spirits connected with the body? Do the idolators among Hindoos worship the assumed forms of their incarnations divested of their spirit? Nothing of the kind : Even in worshipping idols Hindoos do not consider them objects of worship until they have performed *Pranapratishta* or communication of divine life. According to the definition given by the Editor, none of them can be supposed idolators, because they never worship the body separately from the spirit ! But in fact any worship through either an artificial form or imaginary material representation is nothing but idolatry. (Brahmanical Magazine No III, in Nag and Burman : *English Works of Rammohun* p 165).

In the fourth number, Rammohun replied to certain queries directed against the Vedanta. The replies are on the pattern given earlier. It will suffice to insert its preface which speaks for itself :

“Notwithstanding my humble suggestions in the third number of this Magazine, against the use of offensive expressions in religious controversy, I find, to my great surprise and concern, in a small tract lately issued from one of the missionary presses and distributed by missionary gentlemen, direct charges of atheism made against the doctrines of the Vedas and undeserved reflections on us as their followers. This has

induced me to publish after an interval of two years, a fourth number of the *Brahminical Magazine*.

In accordance with the mild and liberal spirit of universal toleration, which is well-known to be a fundamental principle of Hindooism, I am far from wishing to oppose any system of religion, much less Christianity, and my regard for the feelings of its professors would restrain me from thus exposing its errors, were they not forced upon my notice by the indiscreet assaults still made by Christian writers on the Hindoo religion. But when they scruple not to wound the feelings of Hindoos by attacking the most ancient and sacred oracles of his faith, inspired Vedas, which have been revered from generation to generation, from time immemorial, should he submit to such wanton aggression without endeavouring to convince these gentlemen, that in the language of their own Scriptures, they "strain at a gnat and swallow a camel" (Matt. XXII, 24)? Hence they may at least learn from experience lesson of charity, which they are ready enough to inculcate upon others overlooking, at the same time, the precept given by their God. "Do unto others as you would wish to be done by", implying that if you wish others to treat your religion respectfully, you should not throw offensive reflections upon the religion of others. I shall still be extremely glad to enter upon a minute investigation of the comparative merits of our respective religion, more especially if the Christian writers carry on the controversy in moderate and decorous language worthy of literary character and sincere inquirer after truth."

The fourth number, published in 1823, carried a reply from Rammohun to the charge of the existence of atheism in Vedanta, made by the missionaries as follows :

"I shall now, in a few words, for the information of the missionary gentlemen, lay down our religious creed. In conformity with the precepts of our ancient religion, contained in the Holy Vedanta, though disregarded by the generality of moderns, we look up to One Being as the animating and regulating principle of the whole collective body of the universe, and as the origin of all individual

souls——and we reject idolatry in every form and under whatsoever veil of sophistry it may be practised, either in adoration of an artificial, a natural or an imaginary object.....”

Brahman Sebadhi

The first and second issues of *Brahman Sebadhi* published the queries of the missionaries and Rammohun's replies. The answers to Rammohun's replies were published in English in the *Friend of India* (Issue no. 38).

In the third issue of *Brahman Sebadhi*, Rammohun put some counter questions in respect of Christ as delineated in the scriptures. The missionaries attacked both Hinduism and the Hindu scriptures and passed derogatory remarks about them. Rammohun protested vehemently. The missionaries attacked Hindu idol worship, rituals and ceremonies in such a taunting and insulting manner that Rammohun could not tolerate such remarks though he too deprecated certain practices, but at the same time knew that the fundamental position was not unsound. He would not take such criticism from foreign missionaries who had no intention of appreciating the higher concepts of Hindu Philosophy, nor its historical thought-currents, nor the subtle mysticism of the uppermost layer of the society, nor the lower forms of worship sanctioned for the appropriate layers of believers.

Rammohun alone stood up to the defence of Hinduism whenever it was attacked by the missionaries or others. The Dharma Sabha group led by Raja Radhakanta Dev, which should have been the defender of Hinduism and which stood against Rammohun's so-called deviation from traditional Hinduism in practice, maintained an inexplicable silence to all the aspersions and unbecoming attacks made upon them. In these controversies, it looked as if, Rammohun was the only Hindu living in Bengal——the only one who was competent enough to enter into intellectual combats with hostile groups holding different views from what the missionaries did. One has no reason to doubt that the missionaries hired ortho-

dox Hindu pundits to carry on the polemical fight on their behalf. The pity is that it was possible and such pundits were available.

Bengali Newspaper "Sambad Kaumudi"

When the controversies between the two groups were going on, a need was felt also for a Bengali newspaper which could place the Hindu point of view forcefully without misleading the readers. In 1821, Rammohun started a weekly called *Sambad Kaumudi* in Bengali, which also appeared in English. Naturally, this paper served a very useful purpose. Its clearness, sobriety and yet its forcefulness raised the prestige of the paper to a considerable height.

In 1823, a pamphlet was published entitled *Humble Suggestions to his Countrymen who believe in the One True God*. It bore the name of Prosunno Koomar Thakoor, but in fact, it was composed by Rammohun. In this tract, he developed certain universal ideals.

"...amongst Europeans, those who believe Jesus Christ to be God himself, and conceive Him to be possessed of a particular form, and maintain Father, Son and Holy Ghost to be one God, should not be treated in an unfriendly manner. On the contrary we should act towards them in the same manner as we act towards those of our countrymen who, without forming any external image, meditate upon Rama and other supposed incarnations—Again, those amongst Europeans who believing Jesus Christ to be the Supreme Being construct various images of Him should not be hated....."

The Bengali version of this tract was entitled *Prarthana Patra*. Both the English and Bengali versions came out together. In the same year (1823) *Padri O Shishya Sambad* came out in Bengali. It is an imaginary dialogue between a Trinitarian missionary and three Chinese converts to this brand of Christianity. An English version, "Dialogue Between a Trinitarian Missionary and Three Chinese Converts", came out the same year.

It will be remembered that Rammohun in his Memorial to Lord Amherst wrote that "the Sanskrit system of education would be the best calculated to keep this country in darkness." Bishop Heber wrote on this Memorial the following in March 1824 :

"Rammohun Roy, a learned native, who has sometimes been called, though I fear without reason, a Christian. remonstrated with this (Orientalist) system last year in a paper which he sent me to be put into Lord Amherst's hands and which for its good English, good sense, and forcible arguments, is a real curiosity, as coming from an Asiatic."

Sometime after, in 1825 Rammohun wrote a tract called *Different Modes of Worship* in Sanskrit and published it under the name of his friend Sivaprasad Sarma. It indicated what one should accept and reject in Vedanta. He cited from Bhagavata :

"Man shall worship me the Lord of the Universe by means of an image or any other form, during the intervals of leisure from the performance of ritual observances prescribed for the class to which he belongs, until he becomes conscious that I dwell in all beings."

It will be seen from the above that after Rammohun had answered all criticisms of the missionaries, he continued his activities in full vigour. His writings from 1821 to 1825, the bare mention of which has been given above, show it, though all this while he was involved in unwanted litigations.

Freedom of the Indian Press and Rammohun as its Champion

LORD Wellesley on becoming Governor-General in 1798 adopted progressive measures particularly for advancement of the people. He encouraged intellectual activities of the Fort William College. But on the other hand, he had to adopt rigid censorship of the press (then entirely in the hands of the English people) because of Napoleon's threats to Britain's eastern possessions and because of repercussions of the French Revolutionary ideas on England and on India. Therefore Wellesley had to make very stringent laws about the press providing penalty of even deportation and cancellation of licence which was required for residing in a British settlement. Thus came the first imposition of censorship on the Indian Press.¹ Later on, when Lord Moira came, the condition in India improved vastly and he felt no necessity of rigorous censorship. He removed it by passing the Regulation of 1818. Freedom of Press was restored very largely and in a modified form.

From an early period of his public life, Rammohun had come to believe that the most effective method of awakening the interest of the common people was newspapers and journals. For the exercise of commonsense to differentiate between right and wrong, salutary and harmful, Rammohun felt that newspapers would be the most helpful instrument. He therefore spent a lot of his own money in this direction by starting

a periodical for educating the public. It was as late as in 1821 that he took up journalism, probably provoked by the Baptist Mission's attacks on Hindu religion and its practices.

The weekly in Bengali known as *Sambad Kaumudi* (started by Rammohun as referred earlier) was the first paper to paper under Bengali management. The Baptist Mission's Bengali weekly *Samachar Durpan* had started three years earlier in 1818. For all practical purposes, *Samachar Durpan* was the first paper in Bengali though conducted by the Baptist Mission of Serampore and the majority of the articles were written by Bengalee Pundits on their behalf. This latter paper was meant mainly for propagation of Christianity and for views and information regarding Christian people and their activities. The former was meant for internal news of the country, propagation of knowledge in civic matters and recording observations and information on foreign affairs. It dealt with political matters of India in general and Bengal in particular. At times, it also became the forum for religious controversies, criticisms, specially in defence of Hinduism and against attacks carried through the Serampore paper *Samachar Durpan* from time to time. The paper *Sambad Kaumudi* was at first edited by a powerful writer Bhawani Charan Banerjee with the full support and guidance of Rammohun. After some time, Bhawani Charan strongly disagreed with Rammohun on the matter of Suttee practice and he left this paper and joined the group led by Raja Radhakanta Dev, who started another paper called *Samachar Chandrika* in 1822, whose avowed object was to defend and conserve Hindu orthodoxy. Bhawani Charan left Rammohun at a time when he was deeply involved in domestic litigations started by family members. For a few months, since Bhawani Charan left Rammohun, publication of the paper came to a standstill. In April 1822, he started another weekly called *Mirat-ul-Akhbar* in Persian, because its need was strongly felt by the section of people who knew only Persian. This weekly newspaper included not only news and articles on home affairs but it also covered important events of other parts of the world. It may be stated here that an article under the name "Ireland : The causes of its distress and discontent" published in October 1822 earned special praise

from all sections of Indian people on thought. It also included such topics as :

“Government Regulation regarding . . . , Differences with China, Trial of Hayes, Judge of Tipperah, Release of Prisoners on King’s birth day, Shipping intelligence, Exploits of Ranjeet Singh, Plentiful crop, Price of Indigo and Opium, Bhaugulpoor, A great storm, A letter from a respectable inhabitant of Lucknow vindicating Mohamet-Dowla’s character, the making of roads of Midnapur and Kanpur, repairing of a canal from Shaharanpoor to Rampoor, current price, the account of a dreadful fire at Surat, atrocities committed in South Ireland, marriage of Coolin’s daughter at the age of fifty with a boy of twelve, hostilities between the Turks and Persians, Indigo plantation of Tirhoot, ravages of cholera morbus, decree of the Nabob of Oudh for wearing of some peculiar badge by which his subjects may be distinguished, trial of a military officer for murder, war in Turkey etc.”

It will thus be seen that a wide range of topics was covered by the paper and it became a favourite among the large Persian-knowing population. While the paper was going on satisfactorily, a change in the Indian administration took place and John Adam a senior civilian and a strong personality became acting Governor-General for a short period. He did not lose time in passing a Press Regulation by which it was required that every one must obtain a licence from the Government before publishing a paper. The conditions being harsh Rammohun felt he should not work under them, and he decided not to publish his paper (*Mirat*) any more under such humiliating terms. As a protest, he ceased to bring out *Mirat* but he did not go to the extreme of stopping *Sambad Kaumudi* also. While stopping *Mirat*, he wrote the following :

“Under these circumstances, I, the least of all the human race, in consideration of several difficulties, have, with much regret and reluctance, relinquished the publication of this Paper (*Mirat-ul-Akhbar*). The difficulties are : *First*,—Although it is very easy for those European gentlemen, who have the honour to be acquainted with the Chief Secretary to Government to obtain a Licence accord-

ing to the prescribed form; yet for a humble individual like myself, it is very hard to make his way through the porters and attendants of a great personage; or to enter the doors of the police court crowded with people of all classes, for the purpose of obtaining what is in fact, already (?) in my opinion (Here a Persian couplet).

Second,—To make affidavit voluntarily in an open court, in the presence of magistrates, is looked upon as very mean and censurable by those who watch the conduct of their neighbours. Besides, the publication of newspaper is not incumbent upon every person, so that he must resort to the evasion of establishing fictitious proprietors, which is contrary to Law, and repugnant to conscience.

Thirdly,—After incurring the disrepute of solicitation and suffering the dishonour of making affidavit, the constant apprehension of the Licence being recalled by Government which would disgrace the person in the eyes of the world

I now entreat those kind and liberal gentlemen of Persia and Hindusthan, who have honoured the *Mirat-ul-Akhbar* with their patronage, that, in consideration of the reasons above stated, they will excuse the non-fulfilment of my promise to make them acquainted with passing events... ..”

Both *Sambad Kaumudi* and *Mirat* were supplying as stated before, news on social, political, historical and literary topics. They were also giving up-to-date news of important European countries. Rammohun used to write for *Sambad Kaumudi* and for *Mirat* and contributed also translations as well as original articles to another weekly in English *Calcutta Journal* edited by his friend Buckingham which had been in existence since 1818. Marquis of Hastings (1813-1823) had started a liberal phase in the administration; his liberal attitude helped both Rammohun and Buckingham to spread progressive views on Indian administration and to express fair and free criticisms. John Adam, the senior civilian on the Board of Revenue and also the leader of the conservative European group, did not like Rammohun's attitude of independence and strongly detested Buckingham's sharp comments, made so openly that Adam called it irres-

possible. In the beginning of 1823, Lord Hastings left for England and Mr. Adam was made officiating Governor-General for a short period. He now looked for an opportunity of stopping this kind of strong editorials and free comments. Just then, some unexpected events took place which gave the Acting Governor-General the opportunity he was looking for. It was these series of events which gave Rammohun and Buckingham occasion to be unsparing in their public utterances and Adam thus got the chance to take action.

The first event was that Rammohun, while reporting in his *Mirat* Dr. Middleton's death with an obituary notice, made "some laudatory remarks on his learning and concluded the article by stating that the Bishop, having been now relieved from the cares and anxieties of this world, had 'tumbled on the shoulders of the mercy of God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost.' In making this statement sarcastically, impugning the doctrine of Trinity, he evidently showed that he had not forgotten the ungracious suggestion (changing faith into Christianity) of Middleton when Rammohun met him in his (Middleton's) house". Such remarks against 'Trinity' in an obituary notice were unbecoming of a man like Rammohun and John Adam strongly resented it. Also these remarks were seriously objected to by the Christian community as highly offensive to Christian sentiments. This provided an opportunity to John Adam for taking action against Rammohun but the latter not being his immediate target he restrained himself.

The second event was that within a short time, in February 1823, *Mirat* published comments on the appointment of Rev. Dr. Bryce to the post of 'Clerk of the Stationery' of the East India Company, not only disapproving it but also putting it in a condemnatory tone. This was too much for Adam but still he did not take any action against Rammohun—he was in fact looking for a lapse on the part of Buckingham.

Shortly thereafter when on the same subject of Rev. Bryce's appointment to the post 'Clerk of the Stationery', the *Calcutta Journal* under the editorship of Buckingham published the news with very strong comment. Adam seized

the occasion to pounce upon Buckingham with a clear determination. Adam took the comments as highly objectionable for any Government, particularly coming from a Britisher. Adam would not allow such a disrespectful attitude towards the Government, and Buckingham was immediately served with a notice to quit the country in two months. Rammohun then took up the case and wrote in *Mirat* against this punishment. Adam's decision was followed by quick action and with utmost promptitude Buckingham was despatched out of India in a ship destined for China, whence he was to be carried to England. Normally Buckingham's fault would be taken as a trifling one, if at all any fault, in no case did it deserve such a drastic punishment. This was borne out by the disapproval of the appointment of Rev. Bryce by the Court of Directors. Buckingham however did not let the matter drop here. He continued to criticise and show hostility to the East India Company and pressured the British Parliament until he succeeded in securing a pension both from the Government and the E.I. Company.

In order to bring Britishers and also Indians under a restraint Adam quickly promulgated an ordinance in March 1823, which provided that a weekly, daily or periodical paper could not be published in Calcutta without obtaining a licence from the Government. Sandford Arnot, Buckingham's assistant (Editor's office-assistant) and secretary to Rammohun during his stay in England, was also arrested and sent away to England forthwith. The Government was determined to crush the liberty so long enjoyed by the press and issued a Press Ordinance for the above. At that time the law required the Government to take Supreme Court's approval in such actions of Governor-General, and Sir Macnaghten (Chief Justice) gave his approval forthwith.

Adam's action caused a great commotion in the country and Rammohun would not bow down to this kind of high-handedness. He sent a memorial to the Supreme Court and fought the case with the help of his counsel Mr. Turnot. The Court rejected this appeal and Rammohun then sent

another petition to the King-in-Council (See Appendix X). This one was drafted by Rammohun in a language befitting a law-abiding subject of His Majesty and in consonance with his dignity. It was cogently argued with an expected emphasis on the benefits of a free press. It also pointed out the merits of liberal press-laws which India was so long enjoying. This appeal to the King also met the same fate.

Sometime after, we find Rammohun on good terms with Reverend Bryce; evidently this was because he found a common platform with Bryce in his earnestness to develop religious and moral values among Indians. He felt that some positive good might come through Rev. Bryce who was then Chaplain of the Church of Scotland in Calcutta. Is it not a strange coincidence that just at the time (1823), when Charles Grant died, whose lifelong desire was to popularise Christ's teachings in India through missionaries, Rammohun too should be writing (on December 8, 1823) to the same end as that of Grant, to the dislike of many liberal thinkers? This relates to Rammohun's testimony in the minutes of St. Andrew's Kirk-session on the proposal mentioned by Rev. Bryce :

"As I have the honour of being a member of the congregation meeting in St. Andrew's Church (although not fully concurring in every article of the Westminster Confession of Faith), I feel happy to have an opportunity of expressing my opinion that, if the prayer of the memorial is complied with, there is a fair and reasonable prospect of this measure proving conducive to the diffusion of religious and moral knowledge in India."

In return, Bryce paid a glowing tribute to Rammohun :

"Encouraged by the approbation of Rammohun, I presented to the General Assembly of 1824 the petition and memorial which first directed the attention of the Church of Scotland to British India as a field for missionary exertions, on the plan that is now so successfully following out, and to which this eminently gifted scholar, himself a Brahmin of high caste, had specially annexed his sanction."

After Buckingham was deported to England, his paper

naturally came to a close. It was Rammohun and Dwarkanath Tagore who now took up the cause of progress in the country. With financial aid from Tagore, Samuel Smith the leading book-seller and publisher of Calcutta purchased the proprietary rights of *Bengal Harkaru*, then one of the oldest English papers dating back to early twenties of the last century. The liberal *Bengal Hurkaru* was supported by another English paper *India Gazette* which was also an old paper and liberal in its views. On the other side, there was the Tory paper *John Bull* which was critical about the liberal views propagated by *Bengal Hurkaru* and *India Gazette*. It is to be observed with some regret that *Samachar Chandrika* (a paper of the orthodox Hindu group led by Raja Radhakanta Dev) on most occasions gave support to *John Bull*. This latter paper was in 1832 sold off to a liberal-minded journalist. In this transaction also, it is said, Dwarkanath Tagore came as a financial helper and the name of the paper was changed into *Englishman* of Calcutta.

It should be observed here that within a short time, two or three English and Bengali papers came into the field e.g. *Reformer*, *Enquirer* in English and *Gyananneweshun* in Bengali and English. Taking all this it will be seen that in all progressive dailies or weeklies upto 1830, both Rammohun and Dwarkanath played a most important role by giving financial help where it was needed; Rammohun gave intellectual stimulus too. Many of the younger group who took to journalism attained success.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

Note 1 : Newspapers in Rammohun's Time

ENGLISH

1781 *Hickey's Gazette*

1818 *Calcutta Journal* started by Buckingham with liberal views. It opened almost a new epoch because its views were strongly and fearlessly expressed. Editor Buckingham.

1816 *Bengal Harkaru* (daily), weekly from 1793. Editor Samuel Smith.

1821 *John Bull* was started to counter-act the above paper. In 1830, it was defunct, but in 1835 revived as *Englishman*, Calcutta. Editor George Prichard.

- 1822 *Brahminical Magazine* of Rammohun.
 1822 *Jam-i-Jahan-Numa* conducted by English Mercantile House, Calcutta.
 1829 English weekly called *Bengal Herald* was purchased by R.M. Martin with the help of Dwarkanath Tagore and Rammohun Roy. Later it merged with *India Gazette and Bengal Harkaru*. Rammohun severed connection in May 1829.
Friend of India (Baptist Mission)

VERNACULAR

- 1818 Marshman of Serampore Baptist Mission started *Samachar Darpan* (in 1829 it became bi-lingual).
 1821 Rammohun started a weekly *Sambad Cowmudy*. It became popular and got support from Buckingham. Editor Bhabanicharan Bandopadhyay, later Haladhar Basu.
 1821 *Brahman Sebadhi* (Bengali counterpart of *Brahminical Magazine*) of Rammohun.
 1822 *Mirat-ul-Akhbar*, weekly in Persian started by Rammohun, leased in 1823.
 1823 *Samachar Chandrika* (weekly). In 1829 it became a bi-weekly. Editor Bhabanicharan Bandopadhyay (after *Cowmudy*).
 1836 *Udanta-Martanda* was a Hindi paper issued from Amratala, Calcutta. Started by Jugal Kishore Sukul.
 1829 *Banga-Dut* in Bengali, Nagri, Persian (counterpart of *Bengal Herald*), Editor Nilratan Halder.

From 1830 onwards, came *Parthenon*, *Enquirer*, *Reformer*, *Gyananneshan*, *Sambad Timir Nasak*, *Gyan Sindhu Taranga*, *Hindu Pioneer*, *Bengal Spectator*, *Masik Patrika*, which were conducted mostly by Derozians.

Note 2 : Memorial to the Supreme Court

TO THE HONOURABLE SIR FRANCIS MACNAGHTEN
 sole acting Judge of the Supreme Court of Justice
 at Fort William in Bengal,

My Lord,

In consequence of the late Rule and Ordinance passed by

His Excellency the Governor-General in Council, regarding the Publication of Periodical Work, your, Memorialists consider themselves called upon with submission, to represent to you their feelings and sentiments on the subjects.

Your Memorialists beg leave, in the first place, to bring to the notice of your Lordship, various proofs by the Natives of this country of their unshaken loyalty to, and unlimited confidence in the British Government of India, which may remove from your mind any apprehension of the Government being brought into hatred and contempt, or of the peace, harmony, and good order of society in this country, being liable to be interrupted and destroyed, as implied in the preamble of the above Rule and Ordinance.

First, Your Lordship is well aware, that the natives of Calcutta and its vicinity, have voluntarily entrusted Government with millions of their wealth, without indicating the least suspicion of its stability and good faith, and reposing in the sanguine hope that their property being so secured, their interests will be as permanent as the British Power itself; while on the contrary, their fathers were invariably compelled to conceal their treasures in the bowels of the earth, in order to preserve them from the insatiable rapacity of their oppressive Ruler.

Secondly, placing entire reliance on the promises made by the British Government at the time of the Perpetual Settlement of the landed property in this part of India, in 1793, the Landholders have since, by constantly improving their estates, been able to increase period, and under former Governments, their forefathers were obliged to lay waste the greater part of their estates, in order to make them appear of inferior value, that they might not excite the cupidity of Government, and thus cause their rents to be increased or themselves incapacitated the landholders from discharging even stipulated revenue to Government, and reduced their families to poverty.

Thirdly, during the last wars which the British Government were obliged to undertake against neighbouring powers, it is well known, that the great body of natives of wealth and res-

pectability, as well as the landholders of consequence, offered up regular prayers to the objects of their worship for the success of the British arms from a deep conviction that under the sway of that nation, their improvement, both mental and social, would be promoted, and their lives, religion, and property be secured. Actuated by such feelings, even in those critical times, which are the best test of the loyalty of the subject, they voluntarily came forward with a large portion of their property to enable the British Government to carry into effect the measures necessary for its own defence, considering the cause of the British as their own, and firmly believing that on its success, their own happiness and prosperity depended.

Fourthly, it is manifest as the light of day, that the general subjects of observation and the constant and the familiar topic of discourse among the Hindu community of Bengal, are the literary and political improvements which are continually going on in the state of the country under the present system of Government and a comparison between their present auspicious prospects and their hopeless condition under their former rulers.

Under these circumstances, your Lordship cannot fail to be impressed with a full conviction, that whoever charges the natives of this country with disloyalty, or insinuates or out to prejudice their fidelity and attachment to the British Government, must either be totally ignorant of the affairs of this country and the feelings and sentiments of its inhabitants, as above stated, or, on the contrary, be desirous of misrepresenting the people and misleading the Government, both here and in England, for unworthy purposes of his own.

Your memorialists must confess, that these feelings of loyalty and attachment, of which the most unequivocal proofs stand on record, have been produced by the wisdom and liberality displayed by the British Government in the means adopted for the gradual improvement of their social and domestic condition, by the establishment of colleges, schools and other beneficial institutions in this city, among which the creation of a British Court of Judicature for the more effectual

administration of Justice, deserves to be gratefully remembered.

A proof of the natives of India being more and more attached to the British rule in proportion as they experience from it the blessings of just and liberal treatment, is, that the Inhabitants of Calcutta, who enjoy in many respects very superior privileges to those of their fellow-subjects in other parts of the country, are known to be in like measure more warmly devoted to the existing Government; nor is it at all wonderful they should in loyalty be not at all inferior to British-born subjects, since they feel assured of the possession of the same civil and religious liberty, which is enjoyed in England, without being subjected to such heavy taxation as presses upon the people there.

Hence the population of Calcutta, as well as the value of land in this city, have rapidly increased of late years, notwithstanding the high rents of houses and the dearness of all the necessaries of life compared with other parts of the country, as well as the inhabitants being subjected to additional taxes, and also liable to the heavy costs necessarily incurred in case of suits before the Supreme Court.

Your Lordship may have learned from the works of the Christian missionaries, and also from other sources, that ever since the art of printing has become generally known among the natives of Calcutta, numerous publications have been circulated in the Bengalee language, which by introducing free discussions among the natives and inducing them to reflect and inquire after knowledge, have already served greatly to improve their minds and ameliorate their condition. This desirable object has been chiefly promoted by the establishment of four native newspapers, two in Bengalee and two in Persian languages, published for the purpose of communicating to those residing in the interior of the country, accounts of whatever occurs worthy of notice at the Presidency or in the country also the interesting and valuable intelligence of what is passing in England and in other parts of the world, conveyed through the English newspapers or other channels.

Your memorialists are unable to discover any disturbance of the peace, harmony, and good order of society, that has arisen from the English Press, the influence of which must necessarily be confined to that part of the community who understand the language thoroughly; but they are quite confident that the publications in the native languages, whether in the shape of a newspaper or any other work, have none of them been calculated to bring the Government of the country into hatred and contempt, and that they have not proved, as far as can be ascertained by the strictest inquiry, in the slightest degree injurious; which has very lately been acknowledged in one of the most respectable English missionary works. So far from obtruding upon Government groundless representations, native authors and editors have always restrained themselves from publishing even such facts respecting the judicial proceedings in the interior of the country as they thought were likely at first view to be obnoxious to Government.

While your memorialists were indulging in the hope that Government, from a conviction of the manifold advantages of being put in possession of full and impartial information regarding what is passing in all parts of the country, would encourage the establishment of newspapers in the cities and districts under the special patronage and protection of Government, that they might furnish the supreme authorities in Calcutta with an accurate account of local occurrences and reports of judicial proceedings,—they have the misfortune to observe, that on the contrary, His Excellency the Governor-General in Council has lately promulgated a Rule and Ordinance imposing severe restraints on the Press and prohibiting all periodical publications even at the Presidency and in the native languages, unless sanctioned by a license from Government, which is to be revocable at pleasure whenever it shall appear to Government that a publication has contained anything of an unsuitable character.

Those natives who are in more favourable circumstances and of respectable character, have such an invincible prejudice against making a voluntary affidavit, or undergoing the

solemnities of an oath, that they will never think of establishing a publication which can only be supported by a series of oaths and affidavits abhorrent to their feelings and derogatory to their reputation amongst their countrymen.

After this Rule and Ordinance shall have been carried into execution, your Memorialists are therefore extremely sorry to observe, that a complete stop will be put to the diffusion of knowledge and the consequent mental improvement now going on, either by translations into the popular dialect of this country from the learned languages of the East or by the circulation of literary intelligence drawn from foreign publications. And the same cause will also prevent those natives who are better versed in the laws and customs of the British Nation, from communicating to their fellow subjects a knowledge of the admirable system of Government established by the British, and the peculiar excellences of the means they have adopted for the strict and impartial administration of justice. Another evil of equal importance in the eyes of a just ruler, is that it will also preclude the natives from making the Government readily acquainted with the errors and injustice that may be committed by its executive officers in the various parts of this extensive country; and it will also preclude the Natives from communicating frankly and honestly to their Gracious Sovereign in England and his Council, the real condition of his Majesty's faithful subjects in this distant part of his dominions and the treatment they experience from the local Government : since such information cannot in future be conveyed to England, as it has heretofore been, either by the translations from the native publications inserted in the English newspaper printed here and sent to Europe, or by the English publications which the natives themselves had in contemplation to establish, before this Rule and Ordinance was proposed.

After this sudden deprivation of one of the most precious of their rights, which has been freely allowed them since the establishment of the British power, a right which they are not, and cannot be charged with having ever abused, the inhabitants are fortunately placed by Providence under the

protection of the whole British nation or that the King of England and Lords and Commons are their Legislators, and that they are secured in the enjoyment of the same civil and religious privileges that every Briton is entitled to in England.

Your Memorialists are persuaded that the British Government is not disposed to adopt the political maxim so often acted upon by Asiatic princes, that the more a people are kept in darkness, their rulers will derive the greater advantages from them; since by reference to history, it is found that this was but a short-sighted policy which did not ultimately answer the purpose of its authors. On the contrary, it rather proved disadvantageous to them; for we find that as often as an ignorant people, when an opportunity offered have revolted against their rulers, all sorts of barbarous excesses and cruelties have been the consequence; whereas a people naturally disposed to peace and ease, when placed under a good Government from which they experience just and liberal treatment, must become the more attached to it, in proportion as they become enlightened and the great body of the people are taught to appreciate the value of the blessings they enjoy under its rule.

Every good ruler, who is convinced of the imperfection of human nature, and reverences the Eternal Governor of the world, must be conscious of the great liability to error in managing the affairs of a vast empire; and therefore he will be anxious to afford every individual the readiest means of bringing to his notice whatever may require his interference. To secure this important object, the unrestrained liberty of publication, is the only effectual means that can be employed. And should it ever be abused, the established Law of the Land is very properly armed with efficient powers to punish those who may be found guilty of misrepresenting the conduct or character of Government, which are effectually guarded by the same laws to which individuals must look for protection of their reputation and good.

Your Memorialists conclude by humbly entreating your

Lordship to take this Memorial into your gracious consideration; and that you will be pleased by not registering the above Rule and Ordinance to permit the natives of this country to continue in possession of the civil rights and privileges which they and their fathers have so long enjoyed under the auspices of the British nation, whose kindness, and confidence, they are not aware of having done anything, to forfeit.

Gowree Churn Bonnerjee
Prosunno Coomar Tagore
Rammohun Roy
Hurchunder Ghosh
Chunder Coomar Tagore
Dwaraka Nauth Tagore

NOTES

1. For a list of contemporary newspapers see Explanatory Note 1 on p. 299.
2. For the memorial to the Supreme Court see Explanatory Note 2 on p. 300.
3. Regarding the memorial to the King Rammohun wrote to Sir John Bowring :

My dear sir,

Having been principally eaged in completing my final appeal to the Christian public, I could not pay due attention to my intended long memorial. I, however, made an attempt to bring it to a conclusion after I had the pleasure of receiving your note on Saturday last week, but from the want of some additional revenue documents under the Mogul Government which my native friends of the upper provinces have not yet furnished me with, as well as from a diversion, I am afraid, I shall not be able to prepare it before your departure from India. As this will be my first production in political affairs, I am therefore, very anxious to have it as perfect and well authenticated as possible, so that having established it on a sound foundation, no person can justly ascribe it to a party feeling or discontent with government.

As Lord Hastings is going away very soon, I understood that some of my native friends are about to represent to him some of their immediate grievances in a memorial, of which I take the liberty of sending you a copy and I beg to be favoured with your opinion respecting it.

The report of the Duke of Wellington coming out as Governor-General has given me great concern. He knows, I believe, how to preserve military discipline and general subordination; but I have great doubt as to his knowledge of civil affairs. India enjoys now profound tranquillity and stand more in need of an able statesman than a great commander.

I feel a strong wish to have the pleasure of your company at least once before your departure for Europe and if you will have the goodness to appoint a time convenient to you to spend an hour or two, you will confer a favour on,

My dear Sir,
Yours very sincerely,
Rammohun Roy

September 15, 1822

P.S. I hope you will not at present mention to any one the purport of the memorial, which is not yet presented to L.H.

About this memorial to the King the following extract from the letter (1825) of Col. Leicester Stanhope may be quoted below :

“Worthy Philanthropist, your Memorial to the King of England, demonstrating the usefulness and safety of a free press in British India, and praying for its restoration, I forwarded, with a letter, to the Secretary of the Board of Control. He honoured me with a courteous reply, stating that it had been graciously received by His Majesty.....The Memorial, considering it as the production of a foreigner and a Hindoo of this age, displays so much sense, knowledge, argument and even eloquence, that the friends of liberty have dwelt upon it with wonder.....”

Rammohun's Role in Introduction and Reformation of Jury System in India

WHEN the Supreme Court of India was established in 1774, the British subjects in the presidency towns were eligible to sit on Juries in criminal trials, but Indians were excluded because the term "British subjects" did not include natives of the soil and Indo-Britons or Anglo Indians. This exclusion gave rise to an agitation by the Indo-Britons. In 1816, they petitioned the Home Authorities and in 1817 they sent a memorial to the Supreme Court. Again in 1822, they applied to the Supreme Court when Rammohun also was agitating in his paper on the subject.

By then, it was known to the authorities in Britain that Sir Alexander Johnston, Chief Justice and President of Supreme Council of Ceylon had achieved good success by allowing natives on Jury Board there. As the experiment gave satisfactory results in Ceylon, Sir Alexander was induced to give a note to Wynn¹ with details of the measures he had adopted and the mode by which the plan could be made successful in India. Upon this, Wynn introduced the Indian Jury Bill and got it passed by Parliament in May, 1826. By this Act, the natives (Hindus and Muslims) could sit as jurors in the cases of trials of Hindus and Muslims but were debarred from sitting as such in those of Christians (of any origin). But the Christians (including native Christians) had full rights to sit as jurors in

trials of Hindus and Muslims. The same Act barred the Indians from sitting on the Grand Jury and they could sit on the Petty Jury only. These provisions of the Act created a strong dissatisfaction not only in Calcutta but also in Madras and Bombay, where thousands of signatures were collected urging its amendment.

Wynn's Jury Act was passed in November, 1826 and came into operation at the beginning of 1827. An agitation started immediately and began to gather strength. This also was the time when Rammohun's agitation against *Suttee* through tracts and other means was intensifying. Finding public opinion veering somewhat to his side, Rammohun turned his attention to the flagrant injustice of Wynn's Jury Act. At this time Rammohun clearly brought before the public the invidious distinctions made on grounds of religion and drew up a petition in November 1826 collecting a large number of signatures of Hindus and Muslims.

The petition submitted to Parliament by the residents of Calcutta against the Jury Act of 1826 contained amongst twenty points, the following :

"... it is now nearly fifty years since a committee composed of the members of your honorable House most distinguished for talent and knowledge of the affairs of India, reported that your petitioners ought to enjoy to its fullest extent, the right of sitting on juries and did not couple that recommendation with any reserve on the ground of religious opinions, your petitioners will not complain that the recommendation thus given was not carried into effect; but they venture to assert that it might have been even then adopted without the smallest inconvenience or danger, and now that another generation has passed away. . . ;

... your Petitioners conceive the very act in question proves that no such necessity exists, for since the legislature has deemed them worthy to enjoy the privileges and competent to perform the duties of Jurors in so many instances, it is clear that it has deemed them capable of performing those duties in all cases. . . ;

. . . the upper classes, finding themselves excluded from the lists of the Grand Jury by its provisions, have already shown a great repugnance to the Bill and are unwilling to serve as special Jurors, while the lower classes perceiving the act to be unpopular with their superiors and being less qualified to appreciate the importance of the privilege conferred, are also inclined to contemplate its provisions with dissatisfaction. . . ;

. . . your petitioners remind the Honourable House that the legislature of Great Britain as well as local government of East India Company is bound by the most solemn and repeated pledges to protect the natives of India in the full enjoyment of their laws, customs and religion.

. . . that the duties of a Grand Juror demand more intellect than is required for the due performance of those of a Petty Juror... but they submit that the duties of a Petty Juror if not so honourable are beyond all comparison more difficult than those of Grand Jurors. It is true that the Grand Jury have to decide upon the value of testimony unassisted by Judges or advocates but it is *exparte* evidence only, and it requires incomparably more sagacity to discern the truth among the conflicting statements or adverse witnesses and the eloquent and artful addresses of counsel against which the dry and impartial charge of a Judge is sometimes but an imperfect protection. . . ”

This distinction might have been intended as a motive for conversion to Christianity, and it might have been proposed to intimate to the people of India, in an indirect manner, that the road to European privileges and distinction and an equality with the governing class could only be reached by professing the religion of the greatest part of Europe.

John Bull vehemently opposed this move. Bengal *Hurkaru* a liberal English paper came upon *John Bull* with strong replies. One will also observe how firmly *Sambad Kaumudi* (Ram-mohun's paper) stated the Indian case in December 30, 1826. The purport of the Indian case as it appeared in the *Bengal Chronicle* of December 5, on the subject of the late Act of Parliament respecting the admission of natives to sit on juries is given below :

“(1) All classes of natives, namely Hindoos, Musulmans, Christians, etc, will have the privilege of being chosen jurors, to judge in cases of murder, theft, and such other criminal suits; but it is left to the Judges of the Supreme Court to determine and make regulations respecting the qualifications of such persons as to their knowledge of the English language and judgment in secular affairs; that is, the Judges will permit those only to act as jurors whom they may think qualified for the task.

(2) The Grand Jury is to be composed exclusively of Christians.

(3) All classes, indiscriminately, will be eligible to the Petit Jury, which has the power of determining whether a person is guilty or not guilty ; with this exception, that when either of the parties is a Christian, all the twelve persons of the jury shall be no other but Christians; on the contrary, when either of the parties is a Hindoo, or Musulman, or of any other class, Christians shall have the privilege of judging ; that is, all the twelve persons, or any number of the jury, may be Christians.”

“The *Bengal Chronicle* went on : The consequence of this new Act passed in England is, that in matters where a man's life is at stake, or where banishment, imprisonment and such other severe punishments are awarded, we Hindoos and Musulmans must submit to the verdict of Christians, whether they be the natives of Britain or the offspring of British fathers by Indian mothers, whether they be the common Portuguese or Armenians, or the Christians of Serampore. These persons shall have the privilege of judging in cases where our lives are concerned : whereas we, although living in the same country, or even in the same hamlet with them, and partaking in their virtues, and vices shall have no power of judging respecting them. In like manner, our descendants must also submit their lives to the decision of the sons of Christians. . . .

Missionaries and clergymen have spent more than thirty years in disseminating their faith in different sorts of books and by various other means without being able to make a single true and sincere convert to Christianity; but now the

way is open, and many persons, no longer able patiently to bear the reproach brought upon them by the Parliamentary Act, will hasten to take shelter under the Christian faith. When the rulers of a country use force or art to win over their subjects to their own faith from that of their ancestors, who shall have the power to oppose ? . . .

It would have been consonant to reason, virtue, and equality if it had been ordered by this Act, that as a Christian shall have the privilege of being tried by a jury composed of Christians only, in like manner, a Hindoo or a Musulman shall be tried by a Jury consisting exclusively of persons of his faith; or that as Christians shall have the privilege of sitting with Hindus and Musulmans on the trial of a Hindoo or Musulman, so Hindoos and Musulmans shall have the privilege equally with Christians of sitting on the trial of a Christian. But instead, the order of the Parliamentary Act has laid all Hindoos as well as Musulmans, without any regard to rank or respectability, prostrate at the feet of Christians, whether of this or of any other place. On this subject a memorial has been presented now nearly a month past to the proper authorities in England, by a person amongst us who is waiting in anxious expectation to hear the result."

The *Bengal Chronicle* observed in July 1827 :

"In our last (issue), we presented our readers with the remarks and reflections of a Hindu of Bengal.....that these exceptions are felt by the natives of Bengal as insulting and degrading—as contrary to the spirit of English law, and to the principles of abstract justice—we know, not only from personal communications on the subject which we have from the natives of the first respectability and intelligence in Calcutta, and from the remarks, the production of a native pen, to which we gave insertion in Sunday's paper, but also from an article which we have extracted and translated from the *Sumbad Cowmudee*

The article to which we have referred contains a brief but clear and perspicuous analysis of the spirit and principles of Mr. Wynn's Bill, against some of the provisions on which it strongly and justly protests, on the grounds we

have already mentioned. It also gives us the first intimation we have received of an appeal having already actually been prepared and sent to England against the objectionable parts of the Bill. This act not only proves the existence of the feeling to which we have already referred, but also shows that it has been in silent but useful operation when we least expected it. The prompt adoption of this legitimate mode of obtaining redress for a distinct grievance, originating not with the local authorities but with Parliament at home, must, we believe be as gratifying to the Government here, as we are satisfied it will be to the public in general”

Rammohun felt outraged by the differential treatment. In August 1828, he wrote a covering letter to one Mr. Crawford while forwarding the Calcutta Citizens’ petition (of November 1826) with a few hundred signatures. An extract of that letter is given below :

“In his famous Jury Bill, Mr Wynn, the late President of the Board of Control, has by introducing religious distinctions into the judicial system of this country, not only afforded just grounds for dissatisfaction among the natives in general, but has excited much alarm in the breast of everyone conversant with political principles. Any natives, either Hindu or Mahomedan, are rendered by this Bill subject to judicial trial by Christians... ..This Bill also denies both to Hindus and Mussulmans the honour of a seat in the Grand Jury even in the trial of fellow Hindus or Mussulmans. This is the sum total of Mr. Wynn’s late Jury Bill, of which we bitterly complain.....In common with those who seem partial to the British rule from the expectation of future benefits arising out of the connection, I necessarily feel extremely grieved in often witnessing Acts and Regulations passed by Government without consulting or seeming to understand the feelings of its Indian subjects and without considering that this people have had, for more than half a century, the advantage of being ruled by and associated with an enlightened nation, advocates of liberty and promoters of knowledge.”

In this letter, Rammohun draws an analogy between India and Ireland. He wrote therein that having seen the miseries of the people of Ireland, which arose from making civil discrimination between different religious beliefs, Wynn ought not to have repeated a like situation in India.

A Vision of India's Future

What was specially creditable on Rammohun's part was that in this letter at that remote past, he saw a vision of India's future national aspirations and put them in writing (given below) which, to say the least, was unique as a prophecy :

“Supposing that some 100 years hence the native character becomes elevated from constant intercourse with Europeans and the acquirements of general and political knowledge as well as of modern arts and sciences, is it possible that they will not have the spirit as well as the inclination to resist effectually unjust and oppressive measures serving to degrade them in the scale of society? It should not be lost sight of that the position of India is very different from that of Ireland, to any quarter of which an English fleet may suddenly convey a body of troops that may force its way in the requisite direction and succeed in supressing every effort of a refractory spirit. Were India to share one fourth of the knowledge and energy of that country, she would prove from her remote situation, her riches and her vast population either useful and profitable as a willing province, an ally of the British Empire, or troublesome and annoying as a determined enemy.”

It took more than two years for Wynn to prepare his case for presentation of the petition to Parliament and it was placed before the House of Commons in June 1829. Some extracts from Wynn's observations at the time of presentation of the petition are given below :

“The Petition which I hold in my hand is one of much interest and importanceDoubts, however were still entertained by those whom I consulted, as to the expediency of allowing natives to sit upon Grand Juries at all, or on

petit juries on the trial of Europeans. The little respect paid by the natives to veracity or to the sanction of an oath, had been the subject of complaint among all the most intelligent and best-informed Judges; and the long-established habits of corruption and venality, in judicial proceedings, excited apprehension. Besides, recent as our empire in India is, it appeared that at least in the first instance, it might not be desirable to place the conquered in the situation of the-conquerers. These considerations induced me to adopt the distinction now complained of. The measure was in a great degree, an experimental one; and it was evidently easier, if it should succeed, to extend its effects than, in the contrary event, to curtail them. The experiment has now, however, been tried: and as far as it has gone, has been successful. Both from Bombay and Calcutta, I have received most favourable accounts of its success; and the Judges who preside in these courts have expressed opinions that the concessionst of the natives may safely be extended so far as the right of serving on Grand Juries... ..

..... I am convinced the first and foremost is to open to the natives a legitimate channel for ambition and exertion, by the removal of every exclusion on account of blood or colour. The reproach of our Government has been, that its extension has almost everywhere extinguished the former aristocracy of the country ...

... ..Such is the case with the half-caste but the native is even more strictly excluded from all command or distinction. Whatever may be the length of his military service—however meritoriously he may have proved his fidelity, his courage—whatever may be his rank and family, he can never rise to any quality either of command or emoluments with the lowest European who has just set his foot on the shores of India.”

.....We shall concur in the propriety of a declaration that all the subjects of Great Britain, without distinction of blood or colour, shall be eligible to every employment for which their abilities, education and habits may qualify them*. (Proceedings of the House of Commons, June 5, 1829)

The demand of the people of Bengal for the repeal of the Jury Act of 1826 got solid support from newspapers except *John Bull*. From Bombay, on the other side of India, came a representation for repeal of the law, and this petition was dated December 31, 1829. It contained among other points the following :

“.....To ascertain the intention of the witness, and the degree of credit that is due to them, in order to pronounce a true verdict, a knowledge of the languages of the country, of local usages and customs, civil and religious, and of general character, we presume to suggest, is as much required before a Grand Jury, and before a Petit Jury, in civil causes, as before a jury on trial for crimes.

.....Since Parliament has declared the natives of India, under the advice of the court, to be qualified to serve on Petit Juries, on trials for crimes, it surely may be allowed to us to argue that they are qualified to act as justices of the peace in conjunction with one of His Majesty's British subjects. We beg to be excused for entreating the attention of your Honourable House to the very extraordinary situation of His Majesty's subjects, the natives of India. The dynasties that have been conquered by the British arms in India were only of short duration. Scarcely one of them had been in existence more than a century. We allude to the Nabob of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, the Nabob of Arcot, Tippoo Sahib, and Paishwa,—there was nothing venerable in the remote antiquity of those dynasties and the natives of India had no other attachment to them than what arose from their possession of power. The strength of the present generation did not exist when the Nabob of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, the Nabob of Arcot, and Tippoo Sahib, were conquered. In another quarter of a century few of the natives who were the subjects of the Paishwa will be alive. The immense population, calculated at upwards of 60 millions, which inhabits those conquered empires now look for protection and happiness to the British Government alone. They have no sentiments of hostility to the British Government—they have no hopes but what arise from British institutions it is their wish to possess and to merit public confidence, and under the auspices of your Honourable

House and the enactments of Parliament, to be declared eligible to fulfil and execute all civil offices throughout British India—judicial, financial and territorial.”

Rammohun's presence influenced young Grant

All the petitions were presented to the House of Commons in September 1831 and the Hon'ble Charles Grant (Junior) informed the Home Authorities that a Committee of Enquiry was already discussing the matter. Grant had taken up the petition of Rammohun and others and wanted the Court of Directors of the East India Company to report to him on the subject matter of the Bill, with special reference to the proposed repeal of the provisions of the last clause of Wynn's Jury Act to which strong objections had been raised by both the Hindus and Muslims. In December 1831, the Court of Directors communicated their objections to the proposed Bill. Rammohun had reached England by then and prevailed upon Hon'ble Charles Grant to get it passed. Grant was already inclined favourably towards the Indian demand and there was therefore no delay in having the Bill passed in June 1832.

The new Jury Act came into force on August 16, 1832. Thus Wynn's Jury Act of 1826 was superseded by Grant's Jury Act of 1832 which deleted the objectionable clauses. It may be noted that even after Grant rejected the contentions of the Court of Directors and of the civil servants' group, they combined to place the matter before Parliament and made strenuous efforts to oppose Grant.

In this connection a significant step was taken by Lord Bentinck's Government in passing, prior to the Grant's Jury Bill, a bill called The Bengal Regulation VI of 1832. This Regulation enabled European functionaries to avail themselves of the assistance of “respectable” natives in the administration of civil or criminal justice and to modify or dispense with *futwas* by Mahomedan law officers in certain trials.

Rammohun's alertness

Rammohun wrote on January 28, 1833 *Remarks in Answer to the Objections raised by the Court of Directors* (the letter of the Directors of the Company to the President dated December 8, 1831) *against the introduction of the proposed Jury Bill of Mr. Grant*, from which a few quotations are given below :

“.....The Directors urge, first, that “it is not to be expected that they the natives will voluntarily sacrifice the time and expense which would be necessary to acquire an adequate knowledge of the English law books and acts of Parliament etc. to fit themselves for the office.....

I regret that the Court of Directors should have overlooked the express language of the intended Bill, which is to render natives “eligible” only, not to make acceptance of office compulsory on them, Persons who choose to qualify themselves by acquiring a complete knowledge of British Law.....

With respect, however, to their capability of acquiring the requisite legal knowledge, the Directors themselves entertain no doubt, as admitted a few lines further on, in the following words : “The Court do not question the intelligence and capacity of the natives”

The third objection advanced by the Directors is that “they consider them (the natives) defective in many qualities, particularly firmness of character, which are so necessary to inspire confidence, and so essential to enable them to discharge the duties of a justice of the peace with usefulness and credit....

I am at a loss to reconcile this vague and general charge of unfitness with the tenor of a preceding paragraph, in which the Directors state that “under existing regulations (which moreover they add may be modified or extended without any further legislative enactment) the natives are invested with a considerable degree of authority in the ordinary functions of administering justice, collecting the revenue, and conducting the police and magisterial duties.” How is it that persons deficient in so many qualities”, especially “firmness of character”, have been entrusted

with such important functions, judicial, fiscal, and even magisterial? And what is the wide distinction between the latter and those of justices of the peace that makes persons who are fit for the one, unfit for the other.”

NOTE

1. B.W. Wynn who was President of the Board of Control deserves to be credited with the very important step taken for introducing “Jury Trial” in the judicial system of India after consulting with Sir Alexander Johnston of Ceylon. His scheme, however, suffered from the serious defect of religious and other distinctions. Letters and matters relating to this subject will be found in page 340 onwards in J.K. Majumdar : *Progressive Movements in India*.

Salt Industry of Bengal and Rammohun's efforts for all-round improvements

THE salt industry in Bengal, particularly in the Sunderbuns was a risky undertaking. There were more than $1\frac{1}{2}$ lacs of native labourers called "Molunghees" engaged in salt production on marshy lands under the most trying conditions and in the midst of all kinds of diseases. Besides these, the labourers were constantly running the risk of attacks by tigers and other wild animals. Every year the toll of victims was considerable.

The East India Company had a monopoly, as in all other industrial and commercial fields, in salt industry also which was defended by the Government officials in the following manner :

"The manufacture of opium and salt", said Holt Mackenzie, who was one of the principal witnesses examined by the Commons Committee in 1832, "is conducted with a view to revenue, not trade. My opinion is that, of the suggested changes with regard to those articles, there is none that would not involve a large loss of revenue. In the salt department, I do not think we could, by means of an excise, collect the same amount of net revenue as is yielded by the public sales....."

This industry instead of being well organised under a

monopoly, showed defects. The quality of salt also was very poor. The mode of dealing with the product was all along loose. Statutorily British participation in the technical side or in capital resources was forbidden (it is not understood why this special provision existed in the case of salt industry in India) and so it continued ill-organised in the hands of the natives of the land and was fully exploited by the Company in different ways. As a matter of fact, the industry was altogether in a bad shape in every respect though the quantity of salt produced was quite considerable to meet the needs of the common people of Bengal. Salt was produced in other places also like the Orissa and Coromandel coasts. It has been stated that :

“At the time of Warren Hastings and Lord Clive, the salt monopoly was a private perquisite of the servants of the East India Company, who, in lieu of direct salaries corresponding to their rank or station, had certain shares assigned to them in the monopoly by which they enhanced the cost of salt.....”.

As a result of this unsatisfactory condition and of the mysterious ways in which this industry was handled, the salt trade came into the hands of some rich natives who did not hesitate to exploit the consumers in every way. They defrauded both the consumers and the State. It is difficult to see why the Government, fully cognisant of the industry's unhealthy position, did not take any strong and clear step, specially when it was the State warehouses where the native traders had to keep the salt stored before disposal.

Salt being a prime necessity, its high price and its inferior quality should have agitated the public mind very strongly but outbursts of criticism from the native population were never of the intensity to take the shape of a public agitation. More severe criticisms came from the English people; and a portion of what came from Rammohun himself is quoted below :

“.....Did it never occur to you that Rs. 325 per 100 maunds, or Rs. $3\frac{1}{4}$ per maund, was somewhat too dear when the smugglers would furnish it at 1 rupee 8 annas ? And then too, your Rs. $3\frac{1}{4}$ per maund of salt was augmented here to

Rs. 8 per maund of two-thirds salt and one third sand. Do you doubt the fact ? I will send you some of the compound, and, if you will furnish me with a bill of indemnity, will contract with you to deliver 100 maunds of salt at 1-8 per maund, purchased from the.....of the Company's Golahs at.....at any spot between Calcutta,..... one-third of what is sold to us as salt is dirt, and is swallowed as salt... your price of Rs. 325 per 100 maunds is augmented to Rs. 975....." (From Ram Horee Doss, 1 Oct. 1830, J.K. Majumdar op. cit. pp. 461-62).

The Select Committee prepared some broad questions, e.g.:

Are you aware that the price of salt in England is much cheaper than in India; and such being the fact, do you conceive there would be any objection on the part of the natives of India, arising from religious scruples, to eat salt imported from England—the preparation of English salt being free from all impurities ?

To this Rammohun's answer was :

I understand that the price of salt here is about one-fourth of what it is in India; therefore there is no doubt that the natives of India would be very glad to purchase English Salt if imported; excepting perhaps a very few professional brahmins. The bulk of the people would make no distinction between the salt which is home made, and that which is imported. One-fourth (if not one-third) of the soda-water manufactured in Calcutta by Europeans, is, I think, used by the natives residing in Calcutta and its suburbs and also a considerable proportion of the liquors imported from Europe. (J.K. Majumdar, op. cit., p. 486)

The Company tried to give an explanation, which was nothing but a lame excuse, that

....."the measure or system was not felt or complained against by the natives but that it was objected to by Europeans, who were inveterate enemies of the Company".

The bad condition of the industry in Bengal further deteriorated due to the shipping interests of the E.I. Company.

What was known as coast salt from Coromandel began to be imported into Bengal in considerable quantities. A vested interest grew. Voices were raised in Bengal in vain protest. It was well known that Bengal produced sufficient salt for her consumption. Therefore it became clear that Coromandel salt was developed in the interest of the British ship-owners, though this threatened the existence of the salt industry in Bengal.

All this came to the knowledge of Rammohun but he was helpless because nobody of any position came to join him in the opposition. Rammohun saw, on the one hand, the Company well entrenched in this highly gainful venture and, on the other, the native traders so well-organised that nothing was possible except token opposition whenever essential. He also saw that the industry could hardly improve since it was legally prevented from taking British skill or technique. The industry being entirely in the hands of well-to-do section of natives of Calcutta, the Government gave protection by imposing a high tax on foreign salt, in other words, English salt was allowed to enter India only under high duty.

In giving publicity to the harmful practices in the salt industry in Bengal, the largest credit should go to two Englishmen : Crawford and Rickards who ventilated these grievances in England, at the time of the renewal of the Charter (1833). Rammohun joined them in criticism of the State policy and played some part before the select committee.

The desired opportunity for giving a reply to the statement of the East India Company presented itself when the Home Authorities invited Rammohun to express his opinions on these questions. While he was in England, he had to answer, in March 1832, twelve questions of which some are given below :

Question : Are you acquainted with the retail price of salt in Calcutta and the neighbouring districts ?

Answer : The price of adulterated salt in Calcutta, at the time of my departure, was at the rate of between

seven and eight seers for a rupee, or about 2 shillings for 15 lbs., if my memory be correct; and of pure salt, like the English, between four and five seers for a rupee, or about 2 shillings for 9 lbs. It was, of course, proportionately higher in districts such as Nuddea, Burdwan, Beerbhoom, etc. more remote from the place of production and sale.

Question : To what extent is the salt of Bengal adulterated before it reaches the consumers ?

Answer : The adulteration of the salt is carried to an enormous extent, by mixing it with one-third or even one-half of earth, until, instead of being like salt, it more resembles the earth of which it is composed.....

(J.K. Majumdar, op. cit., p. 467)

This being the background of the industry and the commodity at the time when the renewal of the Company's charter was being considered, pamphlets concerning the product were brought out to draw the attention of the authorities in England. Crawford and Rickards had already started agitation in England against the East India Company's attempts to defend its position. Rammohun, as a consumer, knew that the short supply of salt in the market was there only in order to keep the price high and he was sure that if the supply increased and price reduced, there would be an appreciable increase in salt consumption for them and for the cattle for which the need was genuine. The accumulated grievances moved the Court of Directors to refer the matter to Bengal Government for an enquiry and for a report on the reasonableness of price and other aspects of the matter. Bengal Government referred it to the Board of Customs for salt and opium.

On 28 January 1832, the Board of Customs, submitted its report to the Bengal Government and the latter wrote to the Court of Directors agreeing with the findings of the Board of Customs on 3 April 1832. Bengal Government's letter, in its last paragraph may be quoted :

“.....We concur in the objections of the Board to the proposition of selling salt from the Sulkea golahs at fixed

prices, and are of opinion that while the present plan works so well, it would be a questionable policy to hazard the prosperity of so valuable a branch of the public resources by experiments of which the result is uncertain, as affecting either the comfort of the people or the realization of the State revenue. We consider the Board to be entitled to great praise for their zealous and able discussion of this subject."

C.T. Metcalfe, the author of the above letter, had a reputation of being just and fair but here Rammohun was disappointed. Rammohun carried on the agitation against salt monopoly and salt tax. They expected that by import of salt :

".....the home manufacture might be gradually diminished, beginning in those districts in which the cost of production and loss of human life is the greatest, until so large a proportion of the consumption shall be supplied from abroad, that it might be safe to permit the free import of salt under a custom duty, the Government sanctioning the manufacture in such districts only (if any such there might be) where it could then be profitably carried on . . . Under such an arrangement a material reduction might be effected in the price of salt, which would prove of the greatest advantage to the native population of India to whom a cheap supply of this necessity of life is of the utmost importance." (Parliamentary papers 1831-32, Vol. 6).

But the Charter of 1833 came out from Parliament with the salt monopoly intact in spite of the best efforts of its opponents. Permission was however granted to the Indian authorities to do away with the salt tax gradually.

NOTE

1. Ram Horee Doss was the pseudonym of Rammohun Roy. See J.K. Majumdar, op. cit., pp. 239 and 241.

APPENDIX I

To the Right Hon'ble Lord Minto

Governor-General, etc. etc.

The humble petition of Rammohun Roy

Most humbly sheweth,

That your petitioner, in common with all the native subjects of the British Government, looks up to your Lordship as the guardian of the just rights and dignities of that class of your subjects against all acts which have a tendency either directly or indirectly to invade those rights and dignities, and your petitioner more especially appeals to your Lordship as, from the nature of the treatment, however degrading, which he has experienced, and from the nature of the existing circumstances with reference to the rank and distinction of the gentleman from whom it proceeded, your petitioner is precluded from any other means of obtaining redress.

.

Confiding therefore in the impartial justice of the British Government and in the acknowledged wisdom which governs and directs all its measures in the just spirit of an enlarged and liberal policy, your petitioner proceeds with diffidence

and humility to lay before your Lordship, the following circumstances of severe degradation and injury, which he has unmeritedly experienced at the hands of Sir Frederick Hamilton.

On the 1st of January last, your petitioner arrived at the Ghaut of the river of Bhaugulpur, and hired a house in that town. Proceeding to that house at about 4 o'clock in the afternoon, your petitioner passed in his palanquin through a road on the left side of which Sir Frederick Hamilton was standing among some bricks. The door of the palanquin being shut to exclude the dust of the road, your petitioner did not see that gentleman, nor did the peon who preceded the palanquin, apprise your petitioner of the circumstance, he not knowing the gentleman, much less supposing that; that gentleman (who was standing alone among the bricks), was the Collector of the district. As your petitioner was passing, Sir Frederick Hamilton repeatedly called out to him to get out of his palanquin, and that with an epithet of abuse too gross to admit of being stated here without a departure from the respect due to your Lordship. One of the servants of your petitioner who followed in the retinue, explained to Sir Frederick Hamilton, that your petitioner had not observed him in passing by, nevertheless that gentleman still continued to use the same offensive language, and when the palanquin had proceeded to the distance about 300 yds. from the spot where Sir Fredrick Hamilton had stood, that gentleman overtook it on horseback. Your petitioner then for the first time understood that the gentleman who was riding alongside of his palanquin, was the Collector of the district, and that he required a form of external respect, which, to whatever extent it might have been enforced under the Mogul Government, your petitioner had conceived from daily observation, to have fallen under the milder, more enlightened and more liberal policy of the British Government, into entire disuse and disesteem. Your petitioner then, far from wishing to withhold any manifestation of the respect due to the public officers of a Government which he held in the highest veneration, and notwithstanding the novelty of the form in which that respect was required to be testified, alighted from

his palanquin and saluted Sir Frederick Hamilton, apologizing to him for the omission of that act of public respect on the grounds that, in point of fact, your petitioner did not see him before, on account of the doors of his palanquin being nearly closed. Your petitioner stated however at the same time that even if the doors had been open, your petitioner would not have known him, nor would have supposed him to be the Collector of the district. Upon this Sir Frederick asked your petitioner how the servant of the latter came to explain to him already, with your petitioner's salam, the reason of your petitioner's not having alighted from his palanquin. Your petitioner's servants stated in reply to the observations of Sir Frederick Hamilton that, he had not been desired by your petitioner to give that explanation, but that seeing that your petitioner had gone on and knowing that the doors of the palanquin were almost shut, he had explained that circumstance to Sir Frederick Hamilton, in the hope of inducing that gentleman to discontinue his abusive language, but that the servant had not expressed your petitioner's salam as he had no communication with your petitioner on the subject; Sir Frederick Hamilton then desired your petitioner to discharge the servant from his service and went away. In the course of that conversation, calculated by concession and apology to pacify the temper of Sir Frederick Hamilton, that gentleman still did not abstain from harsh and indecorous language. The intelligence of your petitioner's having been thus disgraced has been spread over the town, and your Lordship's humane and enlightened mind will easily conceive, what must be the sensations of any native gentleman under a public indignity and disgrace, which as being inflicted by an English gentleman, and that gentleman an officer of Government, he is precluded from resenting, however strong the conviction of his own mind that such ill-treatment has been unmerited, wanton and capricious. If natives, therefore, of caste and rank were to be subjected to treatment which must infallibly dishonour and degrade them, not only within the pale of their own religion and society, but also within the circle of the English societies of high respectability into which they have the honour of being most liberally and affably admitted, they would be virtually condemned to close

confinement within their house from the dread of being assaulted in the streets with every species of ignominy and degradation. Your petitioner is aware that the spirit of the British laws would not tolerate an act of arbitrary aggression, even against the lowest class of individuals, but much less would it continue an unjust degradation of persons of respectability, whether that respectability be derived from the society in which they move or from birth, fortune, or education; that your petitioner has some pretensions to urge on this point, the following circumstances will show :—

Your petitioner's grandfather was at various times, chief of different districts during the administration of His Highness the Nawab Mohabut Jung, and your petitioner's father for several years, rented a farm from Government the revenue of which was lakhs of rupees. The education which your petitioner has received, as well as the particulars of his birth and parentage, will be made known to your Lordship by a reference to the principal officers of the Sudder Dewani Adawlat and the College of Fort William, and many of the gentlemen in the service of the Hon'ble Company, as well as other gentlemen of respectability and character. Your petitioner throwing himself, his character and the honor of his family on the impartial justice, liberality and feeling of your Lordship, entertains the most confident expectation that your Lordship will be pleased to afford to your petitioner every just degree of satisfaction for the injury which his character has sustained, from the hasty and indecorous conduct of Sir Frederick Hamilton, by taking such notice of that conduct, as it may appear to your Lordship to merit.

And your petitioner in duty bound shall every pray.

APPENDIX II

অপ্রমত্ত (নৈবেদ্য)

দাও ভক্তি শান্তিরস
 স্নিগ্ধ সুধা পূর্ণ করি, মঙ্গলকলস
 সংসারভবন দ্বারে। যে ভক্তি-অমৃত
 সমস্ত জীবনে মোর হইবে বিস্তৃত
 নিগূঢ় গভীর — সর্বকশ্মে দিবে বল,
 ব্যর্থ শুভ চেষ্টারেও করিবে সফল
 আনন্দে কল্যাণে সম্বরিয়া ভাব অশ্রুণীর
 চিত্তরবে পরিপূর্ণ, অমত্ত, গম্ভীর ।
 (রবীন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুর)

(gist in English)

Give me that Bhakti (intense devotion) which will permeate life and will clean all my work and thought and will give me strength to perform duties cheerfully, Let sentimental outpourings remain under control so that the mind (chitta) may remain full and tranquil.

APPENDIX III

- (i) Madhusudan Saraswati (Faridpur, Bengal) left his home at an early age, and went to Puri to be at the feet of Chaitanya. Then he went to Benares (Kashi) and studied Vedanta until he became an outstanding Vedantist. He attained great eminence by writing commentaries of many volumes of sacred works in Sanskrit. Towards the end of his life, he was noticed to be giving much attention to Radhakrishna. His

friends and followers became anxious and doubtful and thought how that Madhusudan, whose meditation centered round "I am Brahmo" etc., could show leanings to Krishna. One day, the disciples collected together, and put this as their question. Madhusudan replied.

অদ্বৈতসাত্ব্যাজ্যপথাধিকৃতা স্ত্রীকৃতাত্মগুণবৈভবাস্ত,
শঠেন কেনাপি বয়ং হঠেন, দাসীকৃত গোপবধূবিটেম।

আমরা অদ্বৈত সাত্ব্যাজ্যের পথে আকৃষ্ট হইয়াছি এবং ইন্দ্রের বৈভব ও তৃণজ্ঞান করিয়াছি, তথাপি কোন এক শঠ গোপবধূ বলপূর্বক আমাদের দাস করিয়া ফেলিয়াছে। এখানে বুঝিতে হইবে যে যাহারা অদ্বৈত সাত্ব্যাজ্যের পথে আকৃষ্ট, তাহারা অনেকে কিন্তু গন্তব্যস্থানের অন্তরে যান নাই; তাহারা যে দাস হইবেন তাহাতে আশ্চর্য্য কি? তিনি বিনয়পূর্বক বলতেছেন তিনিও অদ্বৈতবাদী হইতে পারেন নাই।

- (ii) Another instance is the famous Indian Swami Vivekananda. He lectured on Vedanta (which was Ram-mohun's main mission of life and on which he wrote many books and tracts and also contributed to the foundation of a movement in America on "Transcendentalism" with Emerson as the leader) which created a band of followers in America. Swamiji was known as an Advaitin but on return to India, he reverted to image worship (Durga puja). Shortly after this, he died.

APPENDIX IV

- (A) ईशा वास्यमिद् सधं यत्किञ्च जगत्यां जगत् ।
तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथा मा गृधः कस्यस्विद्धनम् ॥ १ ॥

ঈশাবাস্যমিদং সৰ্বং যৎকিঞ্চ জগত্যাং জগৎ ।
 তেন ত্যক্তেন ভুঞ্জীথাঃ মা গৃধঃ কস্যস্বিক্ৰনম্ ॥

অর্থ — যৎ (যাহা - that) কিঞ্চ (কিছু - anything) জগত্যাং (জগতে - in the world) জগৎ (অস্থায়ী - transitory, unreal) ইদং (দৃশ্যমান সেই - all visible) সৰ্বং (সকল - these) ঈশা (ব্রহ্মদ্বারা - by Brohmo) বাস্যং (আচ্ছাদিত — আচ্ছাদনীয় - are covered) । (অতএব - hence) তেন ত্যক্তেন (ত্যাগের দ্বারা - by detachment) ভুঞ্জীথাঃ (আত্মাকে পালন করিবে - continue pure living) মা গৃধঃ (লোভ করিয়ো না - Show no desire or attachment) কস্যস্বিং ধনং (কোন বিষয়ে - for anything)

যাহা কিছু জগতে দৃশ্যমান সেই সকল অস্থায়ী বস্তু [মায়া] ব্রহ্মের দ্বারা আবৃত [আচ্ছাদনীয়] জানিবে। অতএব ত্যাগের দ্বারা নিজের জীবনকে [পবিত্রতাকে] পালন করিবে—কোনো বিষয়েই লোভ করিবে না।

(B) কুর্ধ্ব্নেবেহ কৰ্ম্মাণি জিজীবিষেচ্ছতং সমাঃ ।
 एवं त्वयि नान्यथेतोऽस्ति न कर्म लिप्यते नरे ॥ ২ ॥

কুর্ধ্ব্নেবেহ কৰ্ম্মাণি জিজীবিষেচ্ছতং সমাঃ
 এবং ত্বয়ি নান্যথेतোহস্তি ন কৰ্ম লিপ্যতে নরে ॥

অর্থ — কুর্ধ্ব্ণ এব (করিয়াই - by doing) ইহ (এই সংসারে - in this world) কৰ্ম্মাণি (কৰ্মসমূহ - duties and activities) জিজীবিষেৎ (বাঁচিতে ইচ্ছা করিবে; wishing to live) শতং সমাঃ (শতবর্ষ - hundred years) এবং ত্বয়ি ন অন্যথা ইতি অস্তি (এই রকম যে এক কর্মী) নরে কর্ম ন লিপ্যতে (তাহার মনকে কালিমা লিপ্ত করিতে পারে না)

অর্থ : — এইরূপে (সব কিছু ব্রহ্মদ্বারা আচ্ছাদিত ও

বৈরাগ্যেলীন এবন্নিধ বিশ্বাসে কৃতসিদ্ধান্ত থাকিয়া) কর্মসমূহ
করিতে করিতে জগতে শতবৎসর বাঁচিয়া থাকিতে পার। এই
ভাবে কর্মসম্পাদনকারী তুমি কর্মদ্বারা দোষদুষ্ট হইবে না।

The first Sloka has come down to us in the form of a translation from the hands of Maharshi Debendranath Tagore (translation said to have been rendered into Bengali by Ramchandra Vidyabagis) as follows :—

“ঈশ্বরের দ্বারা সমস্ত জগৎকে আচ্ছাদন কর। তিনি যাহা
দান করিয়াছেন তাহাই উপভোগ কর। অন্য কাহারও ধনে লোভ
করিয়ো না।”
দেবেন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুর
অজিত কুমার চক্রবর্তী

This translation misses the central point of “Advaitism” completely and also takes no account of Bairagya (বৈরাগ্য) : The word (উপভোগ) completely vitiates the spirit.

The author places the following translation in the hope that better translation with the import intact will follow :

যাহা কিছু জগতে দৃশ্যমান সেই সকল অস্থায়ী বস্তু (মায়া)
ব্রহ্মের দ্বারা আবৃত রহিয়াছে জানিবে। অতএব ত্যাগের)
দ্বারা নিজের জীবনকে (পবিত্রতাকে) পালন করিবে। কোনো
বিষয়েই লোভ করিবে না।

The real meaning is that the universe is enveloped by Brohmo — live with detachment (ত্যাগেন) and crave no more. It is by this great conception that the proper spirit of the first line can be continued in the second line.

APPENDIX V

Bhagavad-Gita (15th Chapter) Sloka 7.

ममैवांशो सनातनः ।

मनःषट्पাদानिन्द्रियाणि प्रकृतिस्थानि कर्षति ।

“मनঃ যষ্ঠানীন্দ্রিয়াণি প্রকৃতিস্থানি কর্ষতি ।”

স্বষ্টি এবং প্রসঙ্গকালে প্রকৃতিতে লীন—মন যাহাদের
ষষ্ঠস্থানীয় সেই ইন্দ্রিয়গণকে ভোগার্থে আকর্ষণ করে ।

APPENDIX VI

Bhagavad-Gita (2nd Chapter) Slokas 60, 61.

यततो ह्यपि विपक्षितः ।

इन्द्रियाणि प्रमाथीनि हरन्ति प्रसभं मनः ॥ ६० ॥

তানি সর্বাণি.....মৎপরঃ ।

বশে হি যস্যেन्द्रিয়াणि तस्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठिता ॥ ६१ ॥

“যততোহ্যপি কোন্তেয় পুরুষশ্চ বিপক্ষিতঃ ।

ইন্দ্রিয়াণি প্রমাথীনি হরন্তি প্রসভং মনঃ ॥ ৬০ ॥

তানি সর্বাণি সংযম্য যুত আসীত মৎপরঃ ।

বশে হি যস্যেन्द्रিয়াণি तस्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठिता ॥” ৬১

কোন্তেয়, ইন্দ্রিয়গণ প্রমাথী হইয়া যত্নবীল হিতাহিত জ্ঞান
সম্পন্ন পুরুষের ও মনকে বলপূর্ব্বক হরণ করে ; এইজন্য মুক্ত-
যোগী সেই সকলকে সংযত করিয়া মৎপর হইয়া থাকেন ।
ইন্দ্রিয়গণ যাঁহার বশীভূত, তাঁহারই প্রজ্ঞা প্রতিষ্ঠিত ।

ବଳାକା ୧୭

হে ভুবন
আমি যতক্ষণ
তোমাতে না বেসেছি তুমি ভাল
ততক্ষণ তব আলো
খুঁজে খুঁজে পায় নাই তার সব ধন
ততক্ষণ নিখিল গগন
হাতে নিয়ে দীপ তার শূন্যে শূন্যে ছিল পথ চেয়ে ।
(রবীন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুর)

**Oh Lord,
Until I loved you and showed
 my own loving light,
You could not, with all your light
 get united with me,
Your planets stood wistfully in waiting,
Until my reciprocity, that quickened light and sight**

বলাকা ২৯

যেদিন তুমি আপনি ছিলে একা
 আপনাকে তো হয়নি তোমার দেখ'
 সেদিন হাওয়া
 আমি এলেম ভাঙ্গল তোমার ঘুম
 শূন্যে শূন্যে ফুটল আলোর আনন্দ কুহুম
 আমায় তুমি ফলে ফুলে
 আমায় তুমি মরণ মাঝে লুকিয়ে ফেলে

ফিরে ফিরে নূতন ক'রে পেলো
 আমি এলেম তাই ত তুমি এলে
 আমার মুখে চেয়ে
 আমার পরশ পেয়ে
 আপন পরশ পেলো ।

(রবীন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুর)

You and I in one — you cannot feel it until I separate and come out. Then you see me in splendour — you touch me to shiver — then only you feel your own touch — (it is by separating and then uniting that you complete your oneness — you hid me in death and again flashed me in life).

APPENDIX VIII

INTERROGATORIES TO TARINI DEVI (RAMMOHUN'S MOTHER) FROM RAMMOHUN'S SIDE

First—Are you not the Widow of Ramcaunt Roy.

Second—Where did he (Ramcaunt Roy) depart this life... ? ...Was not the *sheraud* of your late husband performed by some and by what branch or member of his family at the family house of Nangurparah and did you not Mortgage the Jewels of your grandson Gooroodas Mukherjee and borrow a sum of money and to what amount and from whom, in order to enable you to defray the expense of the last mentioned ceremony i.e. *sheraud* ? Was not that *sheraud* so performed at Nangurparah

a ceremony in which Rammohun Roy the Defendant did not participate or join and by or in the name of which of the sons of Ramcaunt Roy was the *sheraud* at Nangurparah performed? Where was your son Juggomohun Roy at the time?

Third—Did not your late husband Ramcaunt Roy die possessed of moveable and immoveable property and in particular did he not die possessed of the whole or any and of what part of the landed Property which he reserved for his own use at the time of the partition...?

Fourth—Whether the complainant...did or did not on the death of the said Juggomohun Roy take possession of all the property moveable and immoveable whereof his father Juggomohun Roy died possessed or entitled.....If not what person did take possession...?

Sixth—Was not your late son Juggomohun Roy by the authority or in consequence of the prosecution of the Government of Fort William imprisoned in the Gaol of Midnapore during the Bengal years 1208-10 and for what length of or period of time...?

Seventh—Was not the Defendant Rammohun Roy absent from the family house and from the females of his family during a period of eleven years or during some other and what period of time after the partition...? .. Did not you or other servants under your control receive the rents and profits of the parts of the land and property which had been allotted to the said defendant by his said father and appropriate and apply the same to the use of the females of the family or the said Rammohun Roy...saparate accounts kept of such rents and profits and of the expenses charged to the said Rammohun?

Eighth—Did not the said Juggomohun Roy dispose of such land as his own separate and exclusive property?

Eleventh—Have you not had serious disputes and diff-

ferences with your son the Defendant Rammohun Roy on account of his religious opinions and have you not instigated and prevailed on your Grandson the Complainant to institute the present suit against the said defendant, as a measure of revenge, because the said defendant hath refused to practise the rites and ceremonies of the Hindu Religion in the manner in which you wish the same to be practised or performed ? Have not you and the complainant and other members of your family estranged yourself and themselves from all intercourse with the defendant on account of his religious opinions and writings ? Have you not repeatedly declared that you desire the ruin of the defendant and there will not only be no sin but that it will be meritorious to effect the temporal ruin of the defendant, provided he shall not resume or follow the religious usages and worship of his Forefathers ? Have you not publicly declared that it will not be sinful to take away the life of a Hindu who forsakes the idolatry and ceremonies of worship, usually practised by person of that Religion ? Has not the Defendant in fact refused to practise the rites and ceremonies of the Hindu religion in respect to the worship of Idols ?

APPENDIX IX

युक्तिहीन बिचारेन धर्महानि प्रजायते

APPENDIX X

APPEAL TO THE KING IN COUNCIL

The King's Most Excellent Majesty

May it please your Majesty

We, your Majesty's faithful subjects, Natives of India and inhabitants of Calcutta being placed by Providence under the sovereign care and protection of the august head of the British nation, look up to your Majesty as the guardian of our lives, property, and religion, and when our rights are invaded and our prayers disregarded by the subordinate authorities, we beg leave to carry our complaints before your Majesty's throne which is happily established in mercy and justice, amidst a generous people celebrated throughout the earth as the enemies of tyranny, and distinguished under your royal auspices as the successful defenders of Europe from Continental usurpation.

2nd. We, your Majesty's faithful subjects, now come before you under the most painful circumstances, the local executive authorities having suddenly assumed the power of legislation in matters of the highest moment, and abolished legal privileges of long standing, without the least pretence that we have ever abused them, and made an invasion on our civil rights such as is unprecedented in the History of British Rule

in Bengal, by a measure which either indicates a total disregard of the civil rights and privileges of your Majesty's faithful subjects, or an intention to encourage a cruel and unfounded suspicion of our attachment to the existing Government.

3rd. The greater part of Hindustan having been for several centuries subject to Muhammadan Rule, the civil and religious rights of the original inhabitants were constantly trampled upon, and from the habitual oppression of the conquerors a great body of their subjects in the southern Peninsula (Dakhin), afterwards called Marhattahs, and another body in the western parts now styled Sikhs, were at last driven to revolt; and when the Mussulman power became feeble, they ultimately succeeded in establishing their independence but the Natives of Bengal wanting vigour of body, and adverse to active exertion, remained during the whole period of the Muhammadan conquest, faithful to the existing Government although their property was often plundered, their religion insulted, and their blood wantonly shed. Divine Providence at last, in its abundant mercy, stirred up the English nation to break the yoke of those tyrants, and to receive the oppressed Natives of Bengal under its protection. Having made Calcutta the capital of their dominions, the English distinguished this city by such peculiar marks of favour, as a free people would be expected to bestow, in establishing an English court of Judicature, and granting to all within its jurisdiction, the same civil rights as every Briton enjoys in his native country; thus putting the Natives of India in possession of such privileges as their forefathers never expected to attain, even under Hindu Rulers. Considering these things and bearing in mind also the solicitude for the welfare of this country, uniformly expressed by the Honourable East India Company, under whose immediate control we are placed, and also by the Supreme Councils of the British nation, your dutiful subjects consequently have not viewed the English as a body of conquerors, but rather as deliverers, and look up to your Majesty not only as a Ruler, but also as a father and protector.

4th. Since the establishment of the Supreme Court of

Judicature in Calcutta till the present time, a period that has distinguished by every variety of circumstances, the country sometimes reposing in the bosom of profound peace, at others shaken with the din of arms—the local Government of Bengal although composed from time to time, of men of every shade of character and opinion, never attempted of its own will and pleasure to take away any of the rights which your Majesty's royal ancestors with the consent of their Councils, had been graciously pleased to confer on your faithful subjects. Under the cheering influence of equitable and indulgent treatment, and stimulated by the example of a people famed for their wisdom and liberality, the Natives of India with the means of amelioration set before them, have been gradually advancing in social and intellectual improvement. In their conduct and in their writings, whether periodical or otherwise, they have never failed to manifest all becoming respect to a Government fraught with such blessing; of which their own publication and the judgement passed upon them by the works of their contemporaries, are the best proofs. Your faithful subjects beg leave in support of this statement to submit two extracts from English works very lately published, one by a native of India and the other by English Missionaries; the first is from a work published on the 30th of January last, by Rammohun Roy, entitled "a Final Appeal to the Christian Public", which may serve as a specimen of the sentiments expressed by the Natives of India towards the Government :

"I now conclude my Essay in offering up thanks to the Supreme Disposer of the universe, for having unexpectedly delivered this country, from the long continued tyranny of its former Rulers, and placed it under the Government of the English, a nation who not only are blessed with the enjoyment of civil and political liberty, but also interest themselves, in promoting liberty and social happiness, as well as free inquiry into literary and religious subjects, among those nations to which their influence extends." (pages 378, 379).

5th. The second extract is from a periodical work published at the Danish settlement of Serampore, by a body of English Missionaries, who are known to be generally the best

qualified and the most careful observers of the foreign countries in which Europeans have settled. This work, entitled the "Friend of India", treating of the Native Newspapers published in Bengal, thus observes: "How necessary a step this (the establishment of a Native Press) was for the amelioration of the condition of the Natives, no person can be ignorant who has traced the effects of the Press in other countries. The Natives themselves soon availed themselves of the privilege; no less than four Weekly Newspapers in the Native language has now been established, and there are hopes, that these efforts will contribute essentially to arouse the Native mind from its long lethargy of death; and while it excites them to inquire into what is going forward in a world, of which Asia forms so important a portion, urge them to ascertain their own situation respecting that eternal world, which really communicates all the vigour and interest now so visible in Europeans. Nor has this liberty been abused by them in the least degree; yet these vehicles of intelligence have begun to be called for, from the very extremities of British India, and the talents of the Natives themselves, have not unfrequently been exerted in the production of Essays, that would have done credit to our own countrymen."—(Friend of India, Quarterly Series, No. VII, published in December 1822).

6th. An English gentleman, of the name of Buckingham, who for some years published a Newspaper in this place, entitled the Calcutta Journal, having incurred the displeasure of the local Government, was ordered to leave this country and soon afterwards, the Hon'ble John Adam, the Governor-General in Council, suddenly without any previous intimation of his intentions, passed a Rule and Ordinance on the 14th of March, thus taking away the liberty of the press, which your Majesty's faithful subjects had so long and so happily enjoyed, and substituting his own will and pleasure for the Laws of England, by which it had hitherto been governed. (This Rule, Ordinance, and Regulation is annexed; vide Paper annexed No. 1.)

7th. It being necessary according to the system established for the Government of this country that the above Regulation should receive the approbation of the Supreme Court by being

registered there, after having been fixed up for 20 days on the walls of the Court-room, before it could become Law on the following Monday, (the 17th of March), Mr. Fergusson, Barrister, moved the Court to allow parties who might feel themselves aggrieved by the New Regulation, to be heard against it by their Counsel before the sanction of the Court should establish it as Law, and the Honourable Sir Francis Macnaghten the sole acting Judge, expressed his willingness to hear in this manner, all that could be urged against it, and appointed Monday the 31st of the same month of March, for Counsel to be heard. His Lordship also kindly suggested that in the meantime, he thought it would be advisable to present Memorial to Government, praying for the withdrawal of the said Rule and Ordinance. These observations from the Honourable Sir Francis Macnaghten, inspired your Majesty's faithful subject at this Presidency, with a confident hope that his Lordship disapproved of the Rule and Ordinance, and would use his influence with Government to second the prayer of the Memorial he recommended to be presented, or that at least in virtue of the authority vested in him for the purpose of protecting your faithful subjects against illegal and oppressive acts, he would prevent the proposed Rule from passing into Law.

8th. Your faithful subject agreeable to a suggestion of this nature, proceeding from a source, employed the few days intervening, in preparing a Memorial to Government, containing a respectful presentation of the reasons which existed against the proposed Rule and Ordinance being passed into Law; but in preparing the Memorial in both the English and Bengalee Languages, and discussing the alterations suggested by the different individuals who wished to give it their support and signature, so much time was necessarily consumed, that it was not ready to be sent into circulation for signature until the 30th March; consequently only fifteen Natives of respectability had time to read it over and affix their signature before the following day on which it was to be discussed in the Supreme Court and finally sanctioned or rejected. Besides that this number was considered insufficient, it was then too late for Government to act upon this Memorial so as to supersede the discussions and decision that were to take place in the Court, and a few

individuals, therefore, of those who concurred in it, hastily prepared another Memorial of the same tenor in the morning of that day, addressed to the Supreme Court itself, demonstrating our unshaken attachment to the British Government, and praying the Court to withhold its sanction from a Regulation which would deprive us of an invaluable privilege, firmly secured to us by the Laws of the Land, which we had so long enjoyed and could not be charged with ever having abused. (Annexed paper No. 2.) And although from these circumstances, the Memorial had still fewer signatures, your Majesty's faithful subjects reposed in the hope, that in appealing to a British Court of Law they might rely more on the justice of their cause, than the number or weight of names, especially, since it is wellknown, that there are many under the immediate influence of Government, who would not express an opinion against the acts of those in power at the time, although it were to secure the salvation of all their countrymen.

9th. This Memorial being, by the order of the Judge, ready by the Registrar of the Court, Mr. Fergusson, (who besides his professional skill and eminence as an English Lawyer, has acquired by his long practice at the Calcutta Bar, a very intimate acquaintance with the state of this Country,) in virtue of the permission granted him, entered into an argument, shewing the Rule and Ordinance to be both illegal and inexpedient. (The grounds on which he opposed it are given at length, annexed paper No. 3.)

10th. These and other conclusive arguments urged by Mr. Fergusson, and also by Mr. Turton, both eminently skilled in the Laws of England, powerfully strengthened the hopes previously created by the observations that formerly fell from the Bench, that the learned Judge would enter his protest against such a direct violation of the Laws, and uncalled for invasion of the rights of your faithful subjects.

11th. Notwithstanding, we observed with astonishment and regret, that his Lordship, in giving his decision, paid no regard whatever to the above Memorial, not alluding to it in the most distant manner, not to the argument it contained:

and his Lordship further disclosed, that at the time he expressed a desire to hear every objection that could be urged, and recommended a Memorial to Government against it, from which your faithful subjects unanimously hoped that the mind of the Judge was undecided, and rather unfavourable to the Rule, his Lordship had previously pledged himself by promise to Government to give it his sanction. (Annexed paper No. 4, containing the speech made by Sir Francis Macnaghten the Judge, who presided on the occasion.)

12th. Your Majesty's faithful subjects cannot account for the inconsistency manifested by Sir F. Macnaghten in two different points with regard to the sanctioning of this Regulation. In the first place, according to his Lordship's own statement from the Bench, he refused not only once, but twice, to see the Regulation before it passed in Council, probably because his Lordship thought it improper for him to give it his approbation until it came before him in the regular manner; but he afterwards, when application was made to him a third time not only consented to read it, but with some alterations agreed to give it his sanction, a change of conduct for which no reason was assigned by his Lordship. Again when application was made to his Lordship to hear the objections that might be urged against it, before giving it his Judicial approval, his Lordship withheld from the knowledge of the public, not only that he had already so pledged himself; but even that he had previously seen the Regulation, and expressed himself ready to hear all that could be said respecting it, in the same manner as if his mind had been unfettered by any promise, and perfectly open to conviction. Consequently, some of your Majesty's faithful subjects prepared a Memorial and retained Counsel against the new Regulation and had afterwards the mortification to find, that their representations were treated with contemptuous neglect, and that the arguments of the most able Lawyers would be of no avail.

13th. Your Majesty in Parliament has been graciously pleased to make it a part of the Law of this Country, that after a Regulation has passed the Council, it must be fixed up for twenty days in the Supreme Court, before it can be registered,

so as to receive the full force of Law, an interval which allows the Judge time for deliberation and to hear from others all the objections that may exist to the proposed measure, and might have the effect of preventing the establishment of injudicious and inexpedient or unjust and oppressive acts; but if, as in this case, the Judges enter into previous compact with the Local Government, and thus preclude the possibility of any effectual representation from your faithful subjects, who have no intimation of what is mediated till it be finally resolved upon, the salutary effect of twenty day's delay is lost, and your faithful subjects will be in constant apprehension, that the most valuable and sacred of their rights may, as in this instance, be suddenly snatched from that at a moment's warning, before they know that such a measure is in contemplation, or have time to represent the evils which it is calculated to inflict upon them.

14th. In pursuance of the Regulation passed as above described, the Government issued an official order in the "Government Gazette" of the 5th of April, commanding the attention of Editors of Newspapers, or other periodical works, to certain restrictions therein contained, prohibiting all matters which it might consider as coming under the following heads :

(1st). Defamatory or contumelious reflections against the king, or any of the Members of the Royal Family.

(2nd). Observations or statements touching the character, constitution, measures or order of the Court of Directors, or other public authorities in England, connected with the Government of India, or the character, constitution, measures or orders of the Indian Governments, impugning the motives and designs of such authorities of Governments, or in any way tending to bring them into hatred or contempt, to excite resistance to their orders, and to weaken their authority.

(3rd). Observations or statements of the above description, relative to allied, or Friendly Native Powers, their Ministers, or Representatives.

(4th). Defamatory or contumelious remarks or offensive insinuations levelled against the Governor-General, the Governor or Commanders-in-Chief, the Members of Council or the Judges of Majesty's Courts at any of the Presidencies, or the Bishop of Calcutta, and publications of any description, tending to expose them to hatred, obloquy or contempt, also libellous or abusive reflections and insinuations against the Public Officers of Government.

(5th). Discussions having a tendency to create alarm or suspicion among the native population of any intended official interference with their religious opinions and observances, and irritating and insulting remarks on their peculiar usages and modes of thinking on religious subjects.

(6th). The republication from English or other papers of passages coming under the foregoing heads.

(7th). Defamatory publications tending to disturb the peace, harmony and good order of society.

(8th). Annonymous appeals to the Public, relative to grievances of professionals or official nature alleged to have been sustained by public officers in the service of His Majesty or the Honourable Company.

This copy of the Restrictions will be authenticated by the annexed Copy (No. 5).

15th. The above Restrictions, as they are capable of being interpreted, will in fact afford Government and all its Functionaries from the highest to the lowest, complete immunity from censure or exposure respecting anything done by them in their official capacity, however desirable it might be for the interest of the Country, and also that of this Honourable Company, that the public conduct of such public men should not be allowed to pass unnoticed. It can scarcely be doubted that the real object of these Restrictions is, to afford all the Functionaries of Government complete security against their conduct being made the subject of observation, though it is associated with a number of other restraints totally uncalled for,

but well calculated to soothe the supreme authorities in England and win their assent to the main object of the Rule—the suppression of public remark on the conduct of the public officers of Government of India.

16th. Your Majesty's faithful subjects could have surely no inducement in this distant quarter of the world to make contumelious and injurious reflection on your Majesty or any of the members of your Majesty's illustrious family, or to circulate them among people to whom your Majesty's name is scarcely known, and to the greatest part of whom, even the fame of your greatness and power has not reached; but to those few Natives who are possessed of sufficient information to understand the political situation of England, the English Newspapers and Books which are constantly brought to this country in great abundance, are equally intelligible with the periodical publications printed in Calcutta.

17th. Neither can your Majesty's faithful subjects have any wish to make remarks on the proceedings of the Court of Directors, of whose beneficent intentions they are well convinced, but that the Honourable Body who have so often manifested their earnest desire to ameliorate the conditions of their Indian dependants, must be naturally anxious to be made exactly acquainted with the manner in which their wishes are carried into execution, and the operation and effect of the acts passed relative to this country.

18th. Whoever shall maliciously publish what has a tendency to bring the Government into hatred and contempt, excite resistance to its orders, or weaken their authority may be punished by Law as guilty of treason or sedition; and surely in a country enjoying profound peace externally and internally, and where seditious and treasonable publications are unknown, it could not be necessary for the Government to throw unawares, of a sudden, the Laws which for anything that has appeared, were fully sufficient, and arm itself with new and extraordinary powers at a time when that Government is more secure than at any former period.

19th. It may surely be left for British Judges and Juries to determine whether the mention made of the proceedings of Government, be malevolent, seditious and dangerous to the State, so as to render a writer or publisher culpable and amenable to punishment; but if the mere mention of the conduct of Government without misrepresentation or malice on the part of the writer, bring it into hatred and contempt, such conduct will never receive the countenance or protection of your Majesty by the sanction of a Law to prevent its exposure to public observation, and the discovery of that dissatisfaction it may have occasioned, which would afford the higher authorities an opportunity of removing them.

20th. After a body of English Missionaries have been labouring for about twenty-five years by preaching and distributing publications in the native languages in all parts of Bengal, to bring the prevailing system of religion into disrepute, no alarm whatever prevails, because your Majesty's faithful subjects possess the power of defending their Religion by the same means that are employed against it, and many of them have exercised the freedom of the Press to combat the writings of English missionaries, and think no other protection necessary to the maintenance of their faith. While the Teachers of Christianity use only reason and persuasion to propagate the Religion, your Majesty's faithful subjects are content to defend theirs by the same weapons, convinced that true Religion needs not the aid of the sword or legal penalties for its protection. While your Majesty's faithful subjects perceived that Government shewed no displeasure, and claimed no arbitrary power of preventing the publication of what was written in defence of the prevailing religion of the country, it was impossible to entertain any such suspicion as that intimated in the 5th article, viz., that Government would interfere with the established faith of the natives of this country. Nevertheless, if any person with a malicious and seditious design were to circulate an unfounded rumour that Government meant so to interfere with our religious privileges, he would be severely punished by law : but if the Government really intended to adopt measures to change the religion of the country, your Majesty's faithful subjects would be absolutely prohibited by

the present Restrictions from intimating the appalling intelligence to their countymen : and although they have every reason to hope that the English nation will never abandon that religious toleration which has distinguished their progress in the East, it is impossible to foresee to what purpose of religious oppression such Law might at some future time be applied.

21st. The office of the Lord Bishop of Calcutta not calling him to preach Christianity in that part of the town inhabited by the natives, or to circulate Pamphlets among them against the established Religion of the Country, but being of a nature totally distinct, and not at all interfering with the religious opinion of the native population they could never dream of vilifying and defaming his character or office.

22nd. The Judges of the Supreme Court in Calcutta and of the English Courts of Judicature at the other Presidencies, enjoy, in virtue of their office, the power of protecting their characters and official conduct from defamation and abuse since such would be either a contempt of the Court, liable to summary punishment, or punishable by those Laws enacted against libel. It is therefore hard to be conceived, that they stand in need of their infallibility, which however is in compatible with the freedom allowed to Barristers, of delivering their sentiments beforehand on the justice or injustice of the opinions the Judges may pronounce, and in case of appeal, of controverting the justice and equity of their decision. The only object such a restriction is calculated to attain, must therefore be defeated, unless it be meant thereby to prevent the publication of the pleadings which as they take place in an English Court of Judicature are by Law public, and ought to be accessible to all.

23rd. The seventh restriction prohibiting defamatory publications tending to disturb the peace, harmony, and good order of Society, is equally unnecessary, since the British legislature has already provided a punishment for such offences by the Laws enacted against libel.

24th. Your Majesty's faithful subjects will not offer any

more particular remarks on the superfluous Restrictions introduced to accompany those more important ones which are the principal object of Government, and will conclude with this general observation, that they are unnecessary, either because the offences prohibited are imaginary and improbable, or because they are already provided for by the Laws of the Land and either the Government does not intend to put them in force at all, or it is anxious to interrupt the regular course of justice, abolish the right of Trial by Jury and, by taking the Law into its own hands, to combine the Legislative and Judicial power, which is destructive of all Civil Liberty.

25th. Your Majesty's faithful subjects have heard that, Your Majesty constantly submits to the greatest freedom of remark among your British-born subjects without losing any part of the homage and respect due to your exalted character and station, and that the conduct of your Ministers is constantly the topic of discussion, without destroying the dignity and power of the Government. While such is the case in a country where it is said above nine-tenths of the Inhabitants read newspapers, and are therefore liable to be led by the opinions circulated through the press, its capability of bringing a Government into hatred and contempt must be far less in a country where the great mass of the population do not read at all, and have the greatest reverence for men in power, of whom they can only judge by what they feel, and are not to be moved by what is written but by what is done, where consequently Government can only be brought into hatred and contempt by its own acts.

26th. The Marquis of Hastings, who had associated for the greater part of his life, with Kings and Princes, entertained no apprehension that the salutary control of public scrutiny which he commended, would bring him or his Indian administration into hatred and contempt; and in effect, instead of such being the result, the greater the freedom he allowed to the European conductors of the Press, only rendered his name the most honoured and revered in this part of the world, because it was universally believed, that his conduct proceeded from a consciousness of rectitude which feared no investigation.

27th. But your faithful subjects might forbear urging further arguments on this subject to Your Majesty, who with your actions open to observation, possess the love, the esteem, and the respect of mankind, in a degree which none of the despotic Monarchs of Europe or Asia can ever attain, whose subjects are prohibited from examining and expressing their opinions regarding their conduct.

28th. Asia unfortunately affords few instances of Princes who have submitted their actions to the judgement of their subjects but those who have done so, instead of falling into hatred or contempt, were the more loved and respected, while they lived, and their memory is still cherished by posterity; whereas more despotic Monarchs, pursued by hatred in their life time, could with difficulty escape the attempts of the rebel or the assassin, and their names are either detested or forgotten.

29th. The idea of the possession of absolute power and perfection, is evidently not necessary to the stability of the British Government of India, since Your Majesty's faithful subjects are accustomed to see private individuals citing the Government before the Supreme Court, where the justice of their acts fearlessly impugned, and after the necessary evidence being produced and due investigation made, judgement not unfrequently given against the Government, the judge not feeling himself restrained from passing just sentence by any fear of the Government being thereby brought into contempt. And your Majesty's faithful subjects only pray, that it may be permitted by means of the Press or by some other means equally effectual, to bring forward evidence regarding the acts of Government which effect the general interest of the community, that they also may be investigated and reversed, when those who have the power of doing so, become convinced that they are improper or injurious. .

30th. A Government conscious of rectitude of intention, cannot be afraid of public scrutiny by means of the Press, since this instrument can be equally well employed as a weapon of defence, and a Government possessed of immense patronage, is more especially secure, since the greater part of the learning

and talent in the country being already enlisted in the service, its actions, if they have any shadow of Justice, are sure of being ably and successfully defended.

31st. Men in power hostile to the Liberty of the Press, which is a disagreeable check upon their conduct, when unable to discover any real evil arising from its existence, have attempted to make the world imagine, that it might, in some possible contingency, afford the means of combination against the Government, but not to mention that extraordinary emergencies would warrant measures which in ordinary times are totally unjustifiable, your Majesty is well aware, that a Free Press has never yet caused a revolution in any part of the world because, while men can easily represent the grievances arising from the conduct of the local authorities to the supreme Government, and thus get them redressed, the grounds of discontent that excite revolution are removed; whereas, where no freedom of the Press existed, and grievances consequently remained unrepresented and unredressed innumerable revolutions have taken place in all parts of the globe, or if prevented by the armed force of the Government, the people continued ready for insurrection.

32nd. The servants of the Honourable Company are necessarily firmly attached to that system from which they derive their consequence and power, and on which their hopes of higher honours and still greater emoluments depend; and if it be possible to imagine, that these strong considerations are not sufficient to preserve subordination among them the power of suspension and ruin which hangs over their heads for any deviation from duty, is certainly sufficient to secure that object.

33rd. After the British Government has existed for so many years, it has acquired a certain standard character in the minds of the natives of India, from the many excellent men who have from time to time held the reins of power, and the principles by which they have been guided. Whatever opinion therefore, may be entertained of the individuals composing it at a particular period, while the source of power remains the

same, your Majesty's faithful subjects cannot of a sudden lose confidence in the virtue of the stream, since although it may for a period be tainted with corruption, yet in the natural course of events it must soon resume its accustomed character. Should individuals abuse the power entrusted to them, public resentment cannot be transferred from the delinquents to the Government itself, while there is a prospect of remedy from the higher authorities; and should the highest in this country turn a deaf ear to all complaint, by forbidding grievances to be even mentioned, the spirit of loyalty is still kept alive by the hope of redress from the authorities in England; thus the attachment of the Natives of India, to the British Government must be as their confidence in the honour and Justice of the British nation, which is their last Court of Appeal next to Heaven. But if they be prevented from making their real condition known in England, deprived of this hope of redress, they will consider the most peculiar excellence of the British Government of India, as done away.

34th. If these conclusions drawn from the particular circumstances of this country, be met with such an argument as that a colony or distant dependency can never safely be entrusted with the Liberty of the Press, and that therefore Natives of Bengal cannot be allowed to exercise the privileges they have so long enjoyed, this would be in other words to tell them, that they are condemned to perpetual oppression and degradation, from which they can have no hope of being raised during the existence of the British Power.

35th. The British nation has never yet descended to avow a principle so foreign to their character, and if they could for a moment entertain the idea of preserving their power by keeping their colonies in ignorance, the prohibition of periodical publications is not enough, but printing of all kinds, education, and every other means of diffusing knowledge should be equally discouraged and put down. For it must be the distant consequences of the diffusion of knowledge that are dreaded by those (if there be any such) who are really apprehensive for the stability of Government, since it is well known to all in the least acquainted with this country, that although every effort

were made by periodical as well as other publications, a great number of years must elapse before any considerable change can be made in the existing habits and opinions of the Natives of India, so firmly are they wedded to established custom. Should apprehensions so unworthy of the English nation prevail, then unlike the ancient Romans who extended their knowledge and civilisation with their conquests, ignorance and degradation must mark the extent of British Power. Yet surely even this affords no hope of perpetual rule, since notwithstanding the tyranny and oppression of Gengis Khan and Tamerlane, their empire was not so lasting as that of the Romans, who to the proud title of conquerors, added the more glorious one of Enlighteners of the World. And of the two most renowned and powerful monarchs among the Moghuls, Akbar was celebrated for his clemency, for his encouragement of learning, and for granting civil and religious liberty to his subjects, and Aurungzebe, for his cruelty and intolerance, yet the former reigned happy, extended his power and his dominions, and his memory is still adored, whereas the other, though endowed with equal abilities and possessed of equal power and enterprize, met with many reverses and misfortunes during his lifetime, and his name is now held in abhorrence.

36th. It is well known that despotic Governments naturally desire the suppression of any freedom of expression which might tend to expose their acts to the obloquy which ever attends the exercise of tyranny or oppression, and the argument they constantly resort to, is, that the spread of knowledge is dangerous to the existence of all legitimate authority, since, as a people becoming enlightened, they will discover that by a unity of effort, the many may easily shake off the yoke of the few, and thus become emancipated from the restraints of power altogether, forgetting the lesson derived from history, that in countries which have made the smallest advance in civilization, anarchy and revolution are most prevalent—while on the other hand, in nations the most enlightened, any revolt against government: which have guarded inviolate the rights of the governed, is most rare, and that the resistance of a people advanced in knowledge, has ever been—not against the existence—but against abuses of the Governing power. Canada

during the late war with America, afforded a memorable instance of the truth of this argument. The enlightened inhabitants of that colony, finding that their rights and privileges had been secured to them, their complaints listened to, and their grievances redressed by the British government, resisted every attempt of the United States to seduce them from their allegiance to it. In fact, it may be fearlessly averred, that the more enlightened a people become, the less likely are they to revolt against the governing power, as long as it is exercised with justice tempered with mercy, and the rights and privileges of the governed are held sacred from any invasion.

37th. If your Majesty's faithful subjects could conceive for a moment, that the British nation actuated solely by interested policy, considered India merely as a valuable property, and would regard nothing but the best means of securing its possession and turning it to advantage, even then it would be of importance to ascertain whether this property be well taken care of by their servants on the same principle that good masters are not indifferent about the treatment of their slaves.

38th. While therefore the existence of a free Press is equally necessary for the sake of the Governors and the governed, it is possible a national feeling may lead the British people to suppose, that in two points, the peculiar situation of this country requires a modification of the laws enacted for the control of the Press in England. First, that for the sake of greater security and to preserve the union existing between England and this country, it might be necessary to enact a penalty to be inflicted on such person as might endeavour to excite hatred in the minds of the Natives of India against the English nation. Secondly, that a penalty should be inflicted on such as might seditiously attempt to excite hostilities with neighbouring or friendly states. Although your Majesty's faithful subjects are not aware that anything has yet occurred to call for the precautions thus anticipated, yet should such or any other limitations of the liberty of the Press be deemed necessary, they are perfectly willing to submit to additional penalties to be legally inflicted. But they must humbly enter

their protest against the injustice of robbing them of their long standing privileges, by the introduction of numerous arbitrary restrictions, totally uncalled for by the circumstances of the country—and whatever may be their intention, calculated to suppress truth, protect abuses—and encourage oppression.

39th. Your Majesty's faithful subjects now beg leave to call your Majesty's attention to some peculiarly injurious consequences of the new laws that have thus been suddenly introduced in the manner above described. First, the above Rule and Ordinance have deprived your Majesty's faithful so many years subjects of the liberty of the Press, which they had enjoyed for since the establishment of the British Rule. Secondly, your Majesty's faithful subjects are deprived of the protection of your Majesty and the high council of the British nation, who have hitherto exclusively exercised the legislative power in this part of your Majesty's dominions.

40th. If upon representations being made by the local authorities in the country, your Majesty after due investigation had been pleased with the advice of the high council of the realm to order the abolition of the liberty of the Press in India, your Majesty's faithful subjects from the feeling of respect and loyalty due to the supreme legislative power, would have patiently submitted, since although they would in that case, still have lost one of their most precious privileges, yet their claim to the superintendence, and protection of the highest legislative authority, in whom your faithful subjects have unbounded confidence, would still have remained unshaken; but were the Rule and Ordinance of the local Government to be held valid, and thus remain as a precedent for similar proceedings in future, your faithful subjects would find their hope of protection from the Supreme Government, cut off, and all their civil and religious rights placed entirely at the mercy of such individuals as may be sent from England to assume the executive authority in this country, or rise into power through the routine of office, and who from long officiating in an inferior station, may have contracted prejudices against individuals or classes of men, which ought not to find shelter in the breast of the Legislator.

41st. As it never has been imagined, or surmised in this country, that the Government was in any immediate danger from the operation of the native Press, it cannot be pretended that the public safety required strong measures to be instantly adopted, and that consequently there was not sufficient time to make a representation to the authorities in England, and wait for their decision, or that it was incumbent on the highest Judicial authority in India, to sanction an act so repugnant to the laws of England, which he has sworn to maintain inviolate.

42nd. If as your Majesty's faithful subjects have been informed, this Government were dissatisfied with the conduct of the English newspaper, called the "Calcutta Journal", the banishment of the Editor of that paper, and the power of punishing those left by him to manage his concern, should they also give offence, might have satisfied the Government; but at any rate your Majesty's faithful subjects, who are natives of this country, against whom there is not the shadow of a charge, are at a loss to understand the nature of that justice which punishes them, for the fault imputed to others. Yet notwithstanding what the local authorities of this country have done, your faithful subjects feel confident, that your Majesty will not suffer it to be believed throughout your Indian territories, that it is British justice to punish millions for the fault imputed to one individual.

43rd. The abolition of this most precious of their privileges, is the more appalling to your Majesty's faithful subjects because it is a violent infringement of their civil and religious rights, which under the British Government, they hoped would be always secure. Your Majesty is aware, that under their former Muhammadan Rulers, the natives of this country enjoyed every political privilege in common with Mussulmans, being eligible to the highest offices in the state, entrusted with the command of armies and the government of provinces and often chosen as advisers to their Prince, without disqualification or degrading distinction on account of their religion or the place of their birth. They used to receive free grants of land exempted from any payments of revenue, and besides the highest sala-

ries allowed under the Government, they enjoyed free of charge. large tracts of country attached to certain offices of trust and dignity, while natives of learning and talent were regarded with numerous situations of honour and emolument. Although under the British Rule, the natives of India, have entirely lost this political consequences, your Majesty's faithful subjects were consoled by the more secure enjoyment of those civil and religious rights which had been so often violated by the rapacity and intolerance of the Mussalmans; and notwithstanding the loss of political rank and power, they considered themselves much happier in the enjoyment of civil and religious liberty than were their ancestors; but if these rights that remain are allowed to be unceremoniously invaded, the most valuable of them being placed at the mercy of one or two individuals, the basis on which they have founded their hopes of comfort and happiness under the British Power, will be destroyed.

. 44th. Your Majesty has been pleased to place this part of your dominions under the immediate control of the Court of Directors, and this Honourable Body have committed the entire management of this country (Calcutta excepted) to a number of gentlemen styled Civil Servants, usually under the superintendence of a Governor-General. These gentlemen who are entrusted with the whole administration, consist of three classes; First subordinate local officers, such as Judges of Districts, Magistrates, Collectors and commercial agents; secondly officers superior to them as Judges of Circuit, and Members of different Revenue and Commercial Boards, etc. Thirdly, who fill the highest and most important offices, as Judges of the Sudder Dewany Adalat, Secretaries to Government, the Members of the Supreme Council and sometimes a Civil Servant may rise to the highest office, of Governor-General of India. In former times, native fathers were anxious to educate their children according to the usages of those days, in order to qualify them for such offices under government as they might reasonably hope to obtain; and young men had the most powerful motives for sedulously cultivating their minds, in the laudable ambition of rising by their merits to an honourable rank in society; whereas under the present system, so

trifling are the regards held out to native talent, that hardly any stimulus to intellectual improvement remains; yet, your Majesty's faithful subjects felt confident, that notwithstanding these unfavourable circumstances, the natives of India would not sink into absolute lethargy while allowed to aspire to distinction to the world of letters, and to exercise the liberty of the Press for their moral and intellectual improvement, which are far more valuable than the acquisition of riches or any other temporal advantages under arbitrary power.

45th. Those gentlemen propose and enact laws for the Government of the extensive territory under their control, and also administer these laws; collect revenue of all sorts, and superintend manufactories carried on in behalf of the state; and they have introduced according to their judgement, certain judicial, commercial, and revenue systems to which it may be supposed they are partial, as being their own, and therefore support them with their whole influence and abilities as of the most efficient and salutary character. It is also the established custom of these gentlemen to transmit official reports from time to time, to the Court of Directors, to make them acquainted with the mode in which the country is governed, and the happiness enjoyed by the people of this vast empire, from the manner in which the laws are administered.

46th. Granting that those gentlemen were almost infallible in their judgement and their systems nearly perfect; yet your Majesty's faithful subjects may be allowed to presume, that the parental anxiety which the Court of Directors have often expressed for the welfare of the many millions dependent upon them in a country situated at the distance of several thousand miles, would suggest to them the propriety of establishing some other means besides, to ascertain whether the system introduced in their Indian possessions, prove so beneficial to the natives of this country, as their authors might fondly suppose or would have others believe, and whether the Rules and Regulations which may appear excellent in their eyes are strictly put in practice.

47th. Your Majesty's faithful subjects are aware of no

means by which impartial information on these subjects can be obtained by the Court of Directors or other authorities in England, except in one of the two following modes : either, first, by the existence of a Free Press in this country and the Establishment of Newspaper in the different Districts under the special patronage of the Court of Directors and subject to the control of law only, or secondly by the appointment of a commission composed of gentlemen of intelligence and respectability, totally unconnected with the Governing Body in this country, which may from time to time, investigate on the spot, the condition of your Majesty's faithful subjects, and judge with their own eyes regarding the operation of the systems of law and jurisprudence under which they live.

48th. But the immense labour required for surveying a country of such extent, and the great expense that would be necessary to induce men of such reputation and ability as manifestly to qualify them for the important task, to undertake a work of such difficulty, which must be frequently repeated, present great, if not insuperable obstacles to the introduction or efficacy of the latter mode of proceeding by commission; from which your Majesty's faithful subjects therefore, do not entertain any sanguine expectations; unless your Majesty influenced by human considerations for the welfare of your subjects, were graciously pleased to enjoin its adoption from a conviction of its expediency whatever might be the expense attending it.

49th. The publication of truth and the natural expression of men's sentiments through the medium of the Press, entail no burden on the State, and should it appear to your Majesty and the enlightened men placed about your throne, that this precious privilege which is so essential to the well-being of your faithful subjects, could not safely be entrusted to the Natives of India, although they have given such unquestionable proofs of their loyalty and attachment, subject only to the restraints wisely imposed upon the Press by the laws of England, your faithful subjects entreat on behalf of their countrymen, that your Majesty will be graciously pleased to grant it, subject to such severer restraints and heavier penalties as may be deemed necessary; but legal restraints, not those of arbitrary power—

and penalties to be inflicted after trial and conviction according to the forms of the Laws of England,—not at the will and pleasure of one or two individuals without investigation or without hearing any defence or going through any of the forms prescribed by law, to ensure the equitable administration of justice.

50th. Notwithstanding the despotic power of the Mogul Princes who formerly ruled over this country, and that their conduct was often cruel and arbitrary, yet the wise and virtuous among them, always employed two intelligencers at the residence of their Nawabs or Lord Lieutenants, Akhbar-navees, or news-writer who published an account of whatever happened, and a Khoofea-navees, or confidential correspondent, who sent a private and particular account of every occurrence worthy of notice; and also these Lord Lieutenants were often particular friends or near relations to the Prince, he did not trust entirely to themselves for a faithful and impartial report of their administration, and degraded them when they appeared to deserve it, either by their own faults or for their negligence in not checking the delinquencies of their subordinate officers; which shews that even the Mogul Princes, although their form of Government admitted of nothing better, were convinced, that in a country so rich and so replete with temptations, a restraint of some kind was absolutely necessary, to prevent the abuses that are so liable to flow from the possession of power.

51st. The country still abounds in wealth, and its inhabitants are still addicted to the same corrupt means of compassing their ends, to which from having long lived under arbitrary Government, they have become naturally habituated, and if its present Rulers have brought with them purer principles from the land of their birth which may better withstand the influence of long residence amid the numerous temptations to which they are exposed;—on the other hand, from the seat of the Supreme Government being placed at an immense distance and the channel of communication entirely in their own hands, they are left more at liberty to follow their own interests, and looking forward to the quiet and secure enjoyment of their

wealth in their native land, they may care little for the character they leave behind them in a remote country among a people for whose opinion they have no regard. Your Majesty's faithful subjects therefore, humbly presume, that the existence of a restraint of some kind, is absolutely necessary to preserve your faithful subjects from them the abuses of uncontrolled power.

52nd. That your Majesty may be convinced that your faithful subjects do not allude merely to possible abuses, or point out only theoretical defects in established systems they beg leave to call your Majesty's attention to the observations contained in a number of a most respectable Baptist Missionary work, the accuracy of which, although it has now been two years* in circulation, in all parts of India, not one of the numerous civil servants of the Honourable Company, has ventured to dispute, nor have the flagrant abuses it points out, been remedied.

53rd. It might be urged on the other hand, that persons who feel aggrieved, may transmit representations of the Court of Directors, and thus obtain redress; but the natives of this country are generally ignorant of this mode of proceeding; and with neither friends in England nor knowledge of the country, they could entertain no hope of success, since they know that the transmission of their representations, depends in point of time, upon the pleasure of the local Government, which will probably, in order to counteract their influence, accompany them with observations, the nature of which would be totally unknown to the complaints,—discouragements which in fact have operated as complete preventives, so that no instance of such a representation from the Natives of Bengal, has ever been known.

54th. In conclusion, your Majesty's faithful subjects humbly beseech your Majesty, first, to cause the Rule and Ordinance and Regulation before mentioned, which has been registered by the Judge of your Majesty's Court, to be rescinded; and prohibit any authority in this country, from assuming the legislative power, or prerogatives of your Majesty and the High Council of the Realm, to narrow the privileges and des-

troy the rights of your Majesty's faithful subjects, who claim your protection, and are willing to submit to such laws, as your Majesty with the advice of your Council, shall be graciously pleased to enact.

Secondly, your Majesty's faithful subjects humbly pray, that your Majesty will be pleased to confirm to them the privilege, they have so long enjoyed, of expressing their sentiments through the medium of the Press, subject to such legal restraints as may be thought necessary or that your Majesty will be graciously pleased to appoint a commission of intelligent and independent Gentlemen, to inquire into the real condition of the millions Providence has placed under your high protection.

55th. Your Majesty's faithful subjects from the distance of half the globe, appeal to your Majesty's heart by the sympathy which forms a paternal tie between you and the lowest of your subjects, not to overlook their condition; they appeal to you by the honour of that great nation which under your Royal auspices has obtained the glorious title of Liberator of Europe, not to permit the possibility of millions of your subjects being wantonly trampled on and oppressed, they lastly appeal to you by the glory of your Crown on which the eyes of the world are fixed, not to consign the natives of India to perpetual oppression and degradation.

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